

# JOURNAL

OF THE

## SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

### CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Statement of the Literary Committee of the Society for Psychical Research ..	1
The Possibilities of Mal-Observation, &c., from a Practical Point of View, by S. J. Davey ..	3
Automatic Writing .. .. .	14
Correspondence .. .. .	27

### STATEMENT OF THE LITERARY COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

A certain feeling of surprise and dissatisfaction has been publicly expressed that the Literary Committee, as a body, have not examined or reported on the existing evidence for the so-called "physical phenomena" of Spiritualism; and it is thought that this feeling may be dispelled or diminished by a brief account of the manner in which the work of our Committee has been conducted, and an explanation of our position in this matter.

The Literary Committee had to begin somewhere: some choice had to be made among the various subjects included in the original programme, in which the aims of the newly-formed Society were defined and classified. And it was almost at once realised that there were two decisive reasons for selecting, as the first subject for consideration, the phenomena which occupy the most conspicuous place in the recently-published work, *Phantasms of the Living*, and which are there called cases of "spontaneous telepathy." In the first place, these phenomena seemed to connect themselves in a natural way with the results of *experimental* thought-transference, which, for many months both before and after the formation of the Society, occupied so prominent a place in our minds, and which of necessity claimed the most conspicuous place in the *Proceedings*, as being the first-fruits of the work of the Society's own experimental Committees. And, in the second place, records of spontaneous telepathy held by far the most prominent place in the mass of evidence which soon began to crowd upon us, in response to our published appeals. On these records, then, we set to work; and during the ensuing year a large number of meetings were held, either by the whole Committee or by three or four members of it, in the course of which we gradually formed our view as to the best way of managing the evidential work,

and as to the kind of examination and verification that the alleged facts required. After a time the lesson was to a great extent learnt. Repeated discussion had led all of us to concur as to the points demanding special attention, just as lawyers would concur on the critical points in an abstract of title. After this agreement was attained, the formal meetings were discontinued. We were all now in accord as to the method of inquiry. Henceforth the cases which reached one or another member of the Committee were dealt with by that member, who worked up the evidence to the best of his power; and such consultation as took place was of an informal kind. The Committee met again, when it was necessary to make a preliminary selection of the cases to be published in *Phantasms of the Living*; but as to a very large number of cases, received since that time, the decision has been made by two or three members—the evidential requirements having been by that time so completely agreed on that, within certain limits, there was no possibility of an important difference of view.

Meanwhile a plan had been introduced by which other members of the Society might, if they desired, take part in the criticism of the evidence. From a very early stage the cases received which seemed to have a *prima facie* claim to consideration, in all branches of the research, had been printed in slips, and were open to inspection at the Society's rooms. But the study of them in this form was inconvenient; and the establishment of the monthly *Journal* afforded a far easier means of keeping members acquainted with the information that reached us. A number of cases were printed in the *Journal*, sometimes with comments; but very little criticism was received from outside; and we inferred from this that our methods of inquiry were regarded as on the whole sensible and satisfactory.

We have explained that formal debates of the full Committee on the telepathic evidence were discontinued because they had ceased to be necessary, and had come to involve a considerable waste of time and energy. And now, in view of the length of time that the full treatment of the telepathic evidence would require, it was thought desirable that other departments of the work should be provisionally dealt with by individual members of the Committee. Mr. Myers undertook the examination of the phenomena of "automatic writing," and has published some papers on that subject; it was at one time thought that Mr. Massey would take in hand what we called the P series—the evidence for premonitions of various sorts; Mr. Gurney occupied himself with mesmerism; Mrs. Sidgwick analysed and discussed the G series—the evidence for "phantasms of the dead." This would seem to have been the time to raise an objection, if any

objection was felt, to the treatment of a large department of evidence by a single member of the Committee ; but not a word was uttered, either in the Committee or (so far as we are aware) out of it, in deprecation of the course adopted.\*

At least one more large class of alleged facts remains to be considered—the so-called “physical phenomena” of Spiritualism. The evidence in this class is distinguished by some radical differences from that in the other classes that have been mentioned. To begin with, the alleged phenomena have been for the most part observed in the presence of professional “mediums”—persons, that is, who have a strong pecuniary interest in their production ; and the character of the records, as descriptions of genuine phenomena, depends, not only, as in other cases, on the *bona fides* of witnesses to whom it is all but impossible to attribute a common desire to deceive ; but on the skill and certainty with which the witnesses could guard against being themselves deceived by sham phenomena, in the company of a person or persons whose interest it was that the phenomena should seem to occur. We can no longer say—as in the case of phantasms of the living, where the point of each experience is its coincidence with an external event—that “all the accuracy of observation required of the witness has to do with what he *seemed to himself* to see, or to hear, or to feel.” On the contrary, the whole value of his evidence now depends on the validity of his inferences—on the correctness of his interpretation of his subjective impressions. And in estimating this it is much more important than in estimating the best evidence for phantasms of the living and of the dead to distinguish between his impressions at the time and his impressions afterwards, and the danger involved in producing by questions a fictitious definiteness of recollection is much greater. Again, the evidence differs greatly *in form* from most of that which had previously been studied. It does not consist, as most of that did, of records sent in MS. to the Committee, and previously known only to a very limited circle. The bulk of it has been already published in books and journals ; and the accounts of the best known and most accredited series of experiments are easily accessible, and, however much they may demand study and criticism, do not need to be printed and presented anew.

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\* It may be worth while to remind our readers that neither the Literary Committee nor its individual members represent the Society, or have any claim to speak in its name. They owe to the Society the duty of collecting and sifting information, and of presenting, in the various departments of the research, such evidence as is not accessible, or is not easily accessible, by other means. But they have no power or mission to supply a miscellaneous body of 700 persons with a collective opinion or a collective voice ; and such views as they may express are no more pronouncements of the Society than the utterances of any individual member, or of any other group of members.

Putting these special series aside, the rest of the evidence, so far as we have to consider it, consists in a miscellaneous mass of records, made by witnesses of integrity, and probably of average ability, but for the most part without any special training in the kind of observation required, or special aptitude for the arrangement of tests. Now clearly the very first step, in examining evidence of this character, is to ascertain what amount of competence the witnesses possess in relation to the particular subject in hand—to ascertain how far such witnesses are competent to observe and record with correctness a series, frequently a long series, of the sort of events that constitute the real history of séances. It was useless to bestow any very large amount of labour on the multitudinous records of the past, until some well-grounded opinion had been arrived at on this preliminary question. Still, three substantial papers, published in Part X. of the *Proceedings*, embodied a good deal of personal experience and discussion.

Meantime material had been accumulating which offered a good opportunity for attempting the preliminary work; and there were special grounds for not delaying to bring this material under the notice of the Society. For some time Mr. Eglinton's slate-writing phenomena had been attracting attention, and accounts of them were being sent to the editor of the *Journal*—at that time Professor Sidgwick; and complaints were made that he showed partiality in not printing this evidence for what it was worth, and thus letting the members of the Society know what was going on. At the same time, Mr. Hodgson's investigation into the "Theosophical" phenomena of Madame Blavatsky, and Archdeacon Colley's letter to the *Medium*, of 1878, unknown to Professor Sidgwick before the winter of 1885-6, convinced him that this medium had practised deliberate imposture in two cases, separated by an interval of some years; and he thought that it was due to those members of the Society who were or might be interested in Eglinton's performances that the grounds for this conviction should be communicated to them. For these two reasons—the desire of certain members of the Society that evidence about the recent séances should be printed, and his own desire to put the Society in possession of the facts regarding the medium's impostures—Professor Sidgwick determined that an article should be written, incorporating evidence of both kinds, with some remarks on it. It was in accordance with precedent that the cases should be thus printed, as a means of circulating them among the members of the Literary Committee; who therefore had no responsibility whatever in the matter. Most of the cases had been originally communicated to Professor Sidgwick, as editor of the *Journal*; but as it seemed desirable to print the *whole* of the evidence on the subject that had been sent to the Society, a few records which were in Mr. Gurney's hands were included. In order

more completely to exclude the idea that the article had any official character, Professor Sidgwick resigned the editorship, and entrusted the writing of the article to Mrs. Sidgwick, who of course is alone responsible for the views which she has expressed. It was originally intended to incorporate with her paper some criticisms of the records by Mr. Angelo Lewis ; but, partly because of the delay this would have involved, partly because of the unusual bulk to which the numerous records received had swelled the number (*Journal* for June, 1886), this plan was abandoned, and Mr. Lewis's criticisms were printed in a separate article in August.

Since that time, the examination of the evidence in detail has been carried on by Mr. R. Hodgson ; and this work is still being prosecuted. Its scope is clearly not confined to the particular cases analysed. It should be regarded as a first attempt to estimate in detail the value of testimony in cases where the possibility of an exceptionally disturbing influence has to be allowed for—to wit, the influence of a person skilled in particular forms of deception, whose chief object is to prevent the witnesses from perceiving many of the actual occurrences, and to persuade them, by ingenious illusions, to an erroneous belief concerning others. In relation to this branch of the subject, Mr. S. J. Davey has rendered important service, as may be seen from his communication to the current number of the *Journal*, which will, we hope, appear with additional details in the *Proceedings*. Here it must suffice to state that, in the view of the Committee, the ordinary testimony on the subject, though contributed by persons of honesty and intelligence, has been shown to present such errors and omissions as preclude any assurance that the possibility of conjuring on the "medium's" part was excluded. It does not, therefore, seem necessary that we—or those of us who are occupied with the subject—should examine with equal minuteness the numerous accounts of this stamp which are to be found in Spiritualistic literature. Certain picked records should undoubtedly receive careful criticism. But average observation, ten or twenty years ago, was much what it is now ; and the average evidence of that time is not represented, even by those who believe the phenomena to have been genuine, as superior in cogency to the samples recently examined.

Turning now from the past to the future :—as regards the "physical phenomena" of Spiritualism, we understand that a group of competent persons are forming themselves into a Committee,\* for the purpose of examining any personal experiences of the sort that may be referred to them, and of giving any advice and assistance that they can in following

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\* The President, the Hon. Secretary, and Professor Barrett have already expressed their willingness to act on this Committee ; and Mr. Crookes, Mr. Angelo J. Lewis, and others, have been invited by the President to join it.

up useful lines of experiment—joining themselves in experimental investigation if opportunity offers. They would, of course, have the power of presenting reports to the Society, on their own responsibility, whenever the evidence in their hands seemed to be of sufficient value. Much of this work lies quite outside the normal functions of the Literary Committee ; and, as we think that there is a certain advantage in leaving the whole treatment of the subject to one body of persons, we shall probably hand over to this new Committee any evidence relating to “physical phenomena” that may be sent to us.

But though the Literary Committee, as such, would thus turn its attention to other departments, its members by no means wish to imply that their interest in the alleged facts of Spiritualism has ceased. More than one of us believes that glimpses of these facts—in an atmosphere of unquestioned probity—have been vouchsafed to him ; and these glimpses have powerfully contributed to keep alive our interest in the inquiry. Our minds remain open ; and as experience and discussion make the conditions of evidence clearer, we may fairly hope that any genuine phenomena which may occur will have a far better chance than previously of being recorded in a satisfactory manner.

For be it once more observed that neither in this nor in any other branch of our inquiry can we suppose ourselves to have reached any permanent goal, to have come to any conclusion unmodifiable by further evidence. We do not, indeed, intend to follow into further detail the adventures of that remarkable Russian lady, to whose doings so much type has been already devoted. But there is probably no other topic on which we have already written to which we do not propose at some time to recur again. In those directions which, as already said, we have thus far found most fruitful in results—to wit, the various forms of telepathy—we strongly feel, and have strongly asserted, that we have only made a beginning in what we hope will prove a most important field of investigation. We would beg our readers to understand that we are as anxious as ever for accounts of fresh cases of apparitions at the time of death, of veridical impressions of all sorts, and above all of fresh experiments in thought-transference, whether with normal or hypnotised subjects. The same remark applies to “phantasms of the dead,” which have been dealt with provisionally ; and to premonitions, which have not been dealt with at all. And especially does this demand for fresh evidence—for “further and better particulars”—apply to that varied range of alleged phenomena which are popularly massed together as Spiritualistic. It must be remembered, moreover, that the very phenomena to which Spiritualists justly point as offering the best attainable evidence for the continued existence of

departed souls do in fact belong to a larger class of phenomena which admittedly recur, which are undoubtedly capable of reproduction. Automatic writing, that is to say, and cognate automatic phenomena occur admittedly; or, if this be as yet too much to affirm, yet *we* at least admit them, *we* hold that they present problems of high interest to the psychologist. Whether or not they prove the special Spiritualistic belief is another question; but there are probably many Spiritualists who have it in their power to summon into existence fresh evidence bearing on this question. All persons, indeed, who are interested in experimental psychology would do well, we must think, to attempt these automatic phenomena. But to Spiritualists the point is a vital one. No mere physical phenomena—whatever else they might prove—could carry a persuasion of the continued existence of departed friends greater than that which might be afforded by automatic messages which should contain an internal evidence of authenticity, resting not on subjective considerations only, but on demonstrable coincidences of fact. We can assure Spiritualists that the conclusion which they would have us draw from such phenomena is one which we have no reluctance whatever to accept, if we could find it supported by adequate evidence. Indeed, if we regarded the prospect of arriving at this conclusion as altogether excluded, our interest in the subject would be decidedly less than it is.

We admit, then, that the evidence already accumulated for Spiritualistic phenomena is more sincere, more varied, more extensive than the ordinary world is ready to suppose. But we maintain that most of it is largely infused with a subjective element,—is such as may perhaps be adapted to found a sect, but certainly not to establish a science. This indeed has been the result—inevitable perhaps at the outset—of the strong emotional interest which these inquiries involve. Doctrines which touch on interests at once so vast and so personal have never yet in the world's history been treated in a purely scientific spirit. From the dawn of speculation onwards they have moulded themselves not into Science, but into Religion; and it is not into a Science, but into a Religion that the majority of Spiritualists mould them now. We have no wish to attack, or even to defend ourselves against, believers of this type. But we must repeat that the very *raison d'être* of our Society is to take a course exactly opposite. We exist in order to carry, if we can, the methods of recognised Science into a region where no recognised Science as yet has forced its way. And we appeal with equal sincerity to each of the groups which stand aloof from us on either side, to help us in the task which we have undertaken. To those who deem us *credulous* we say: "Criticism our methods, and we will do our best to improve them. Attack our evidence, and we will strengthen or abandon it." And to those who think us over-

*sceptical* we say similarly, "Offer us more and better evidence, and you will find that there is nothing to which we oppose a mere *à priori* denial,—no case which we will not set forth with candour, and criticise with care." We can well understand that persons to whom Spiritualism has long been a *faith* will not care to respond to our appeal. But if the phenomena exist and recur, there will be fresh groups of persons who encounter them and are interested in them; and we may fairly hope that such new inquirers may find some guidance in our critical discussions of evidence—may feel some disposition to assist the researches of persons who have at least shown that they make a serious attempt to analyse the degrees of testimony. Assuredly these strange alleged phenomena must undergo a long, a searching scrutiny before they can enter permanently into the reasoned creed of men. If such scrutiny has as yet been but rarely directed upon them, it has not been because they were deemed to be above the level of doubt, but below it. From no point of view need stringent examination be dreaded or deprecated. If the alleged truths be real, then assuredly no time will have been wasted which has helped to prepare for them, to explain, to connect, to establish. And if the beliefs should be found to be in large part illusory, yet it will not be lost labour to discuss the psychological causes which have produced, and still produce and support them.

Signed on behalf of the Literary Committee,

EDMUND GURNEY.  
FREDERIC W. H. MYERS. } Hon. Secretaries.

## THE POSSIBILITIES OF MAL-OBSERVATION, &c., FROM A PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW.

BY S. J. DAVEY.

For some time past I have practised slate-writing, and have given up much leisure time to the subject with a view to discovering how far ordinary witnesses can be deceived by conjuring performances. I have received reports of my experiments from various persons, some of which I subjoin. Lest there should be any misunderstanding I must explain what induced me to take up the subject, and the general conclusions to which I have been led.

Readers of the *Journal* are aware that I sent reports of sittings with Eglinton to our Society in 1884, and that I had previously sent reports of the same sittings to the periodical *Light*. I do not now attribute any value to these reports as proving the reality of so-called "psychography," for reasons which will appear in the sequel.

My chief interest in Spiritualism generally was awakened by an



experience of my own, which was as follows :—In 1883, owing to a serious lung complaint, I spent several months at a Continental health resort. During this visit, one of my companions died under circumstances of an unusually distressing character ; and another friend and myself had been in frequent attendance upon him during his last illness. His body was subsequently dissected, in the presence of my other companion, Mr. C. Three weeks after this I was startled one night by seeing what appeared to be the face and form of my deceased friend under circumstances that greatly surprised me, and the next day, whilst visiting Mr. C., who lodged in the same hotel as myself, he informed me that he had that night experienced a remarkably vivid dream in which he had seen our deceased friend. I then for the first time related to Mr. C. what had happened to myself.\*

On my return to England I began to devote some attention to the study of alleged psychical phenomena, and I perused several works relating to the subject, including Zöllner's *Transcendental Physics*, *Psychic Force*, by Professor Crookes, *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, by Alfred Russel Wallace, *The Debatable Land*, by Robert Dale Owen, *Psychography*, *The Report of the Dialectical Society*, &c., and I formed a circle of friends for the investigation of the alleged phenomena. During my first experiments I found myself affected a good deal by involuntary movements which I could not then account for, though I now have little doubt they were caused simply by nervous excitement ; however, nothing of any significance happened, and it was at this stage of my investigation that I made the acquaintance of Eglinton, of whose so-called "psychography" I had heard. At the conclusion of my first séance with Eglinton, which took place in June, 1884, I could not account for the phenomena except on the Spiritualistic hypothesis, and I was led to believe, from the "communications" which I then received, that I possessed psychic powers. My second séance with Eglinton, on October 8th, 1884, was a failure, but my third, on October 9th, 1884, was a success. I was somewhat excited at these results, and even contemplated making a collection of cases to convince the unbelieving world. On October 9th, 1884, the supposed invisibles informed me that I had "developed my own powers to an appreciable extent, owing to their former advice." Now, between my first and third séances I certainly had experienced privately one or two incidents that I then regarded as genuine psychical phenomena, and I will briefly relate one of these experiences.

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\* I have since had some correspondence with Mr. C., who does not look upon the incident as anything more than a dream coincidence. At the time, I attached particular significance to my own experience, as my friend, when alive, had discussed the question of Spiritualism with me.

One afternoon in September, 1884, I took two slates and determined to experiment alone. I held them together with a small pencil grain between. I was in my library; the slates were taken out of a private box by myself; I glanced at them and placed them in the position above described. In the course of some few minutes I lifted up the slates and examined them, and found the word "Beware" written in large characters across the under side of the upper slate. My astonishment at this cannot well be described, as I felt convinced I had previously thoroughly examined the slates, and I took the first train to London, and showed them to my friend Mr. X. (see *Journal* for October, pp. 435, 436). He agreed with me in saying it was almost incredible. I then attributed the above, and one or two kindred phenomena, to the action of an abnormal power proceeding from myself. Eglinton could have conjectured this belief from a private letter which I sent in answer to a correspondent who wrote to *Light*, asking for advice as to methods of investigation, and which, by a mistake on the part of the editor, was inserted in *Light*, September 20th, 1884, with my name and address appended.\* Or it is possible I may have told Eglinton myself.

It has been proved to me that these experiences were neither more nor less than simple hoaxes, perpetrated by some of my friends. Another incident of a somewhat ludicrous character may be mentioned here. I had bought a trick slate, which had been sold to me as an explanation of the process used by mediums. I found, however, that this was scarcely true, as the trick was a very palpable one. I had put this slate away in my drawer with the other slates containing the writing of Eglinton's supposed spirits. One morning, on going to this drawer, which I usually kept locked, I found the following words, or something to the same effect, written across the false surface of the trick slate: "We object to your learning trickery." I then compared this writing with some on Eglinton's slates, and found it apparently identical. I was naturally somewhat amazed, and I did not then for a moment suspect that my friends were hoaxing me, and that the above sentence had been written in careful imitation of the writing on Eglinton's slates. Also, during séances held privately, I con-

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\* In my advice to the correspondent, the following passage occurs:—"If he can manage it, I should advise him to try and get a sitting with a good medium. Eglinton, of 12, Old Quebec-street, London, is very powerful, and although he will expect some recompense for his trouble, it will save 'Mopsus' much future time. He will find Eglinton's spirit-guides will probably inform him the cause of all the failures.

"I may add that a short time ago I was quite a sceptic as regards Spiritualism, and by simply following out 'M.A.'s' instructions in *Light*, in my own family circle, I have gained conviction of the truth, and am now slowly developing into a medium myself."

tinued to be frequently seized by spasmodic movements when I believed "uncanny" manifestations were about to take place. As a conjurer, I have been since amused sometimes at similar convulsions in others during my conjuring performances, when the sitters have supposed that the writing was being produced by supernatural means; my own shudderings during these performances being, of course, part of the trick.

I had several other sésances with Eglinton after October 9th, 1884, all of which proved blanks, except one held on January 15th, 1885. One of my friends who accompanied me to this sitting assured me he had actually seen Eglinton imitating the sound of writing at the time when I thought a long communication was being written. I endeavoured to be more watchful at the two sittings which I had after this, the final sésance being on June 25th, 1885; but at neither of these did any results occur, although I did not inform Eglinton of the information I had received. However, partly in consequence of my friend's conviction that Eglinton's performances were only tricks, I began, after getting no further results, to apply myself anew to see what could be produced by conjuring. I then met with an individual who professed to sell me "secrets," which he gave me to understand he had procured from an American medium. I also bought one by which words, &c., could be made to appear on the flesh after it was rubbed over with burnt paper. I soon made use of the knowledge thus acquired by performing before friends and acquaintances, and I found that even at that early stage of my practice many of them could be deceived as to my real *modus operandi*. Eglinton has attempted to give particular validity to the accounts of my successful sésances with him in 1884, claiming my testimony as that of one who had "specially studied and practised the art of simulating the slate-writing phenomena under conjurers' conditions" (*Light*, July 31st, 1886). I have already pointed out elsewhere that I was not an expert in 1884, when I wrote the reports in question, which Eglinton describes as "among the most favourable and decisive which have appeared." The extent of my knowledge on this subject at that time will be found described by myself in *Light*, August 21st, 1886, as follows:—

I went to Mr. Eglinton on June 30th, 1884, and I do not remember ever having previously performed a single conjuring trick as applied to slate-writing, and also the question of conjuring in any other form had in no way interested me. Previously to my second sésance, October 9th, 1884, I made some three or four attempts with a thimble, pencil, and a slate held under the table, and with a trick slate made of card-board, with a movable flap and blotting-paper.

I noticed that many persons made statements concerning my per-

performances, as to the conditions of the production of the writing, which were just as emphatic as I made in my own reports about Eglinton, and I also noticed that nearly all these statements were entirely wrong. Even when I sometimes revealed the fact that I was merely a conjurer, the reply which I frequently got was something of this kind: "Yes, you may say it is conjuring, but it could not have been done by that means when I did so-and-so" (describing a supposed test) "and yet we got the writing all the same." As I went on I was gradually forced to the conviction that my own reports about Eglinton were just as unreliable as these statements about myself, although I was not then aware of the serious discrepancies between them which Mr. Hodgson has lately pointed out in the *Journal* (October and November, 1886). In consequence of the change which was taking place in my opinion, I wrote, on July 30th, 1885, to Mr. Farmer, requesting him for "private reasons," not to make any reference to myself, either directly or indirectly, in the work about Eglinton (*'Twiix Two Worlds*) which he was then preparing for the press.

From a study of various exposures of slate-writing mediums, and other incidents which have been privately brought to my notice, I cannot now entertain a doubt that they have frequently practised deception; and whether it is a fact that they, nevertheless, occasionally obtain the help of "spiritual" beings, or manifest supernormal powers, is a question upon which I have good reasons for being now very sceptical. I do not profess to know how all the slate-writing tricks are performed, nor have I ever asserted that my own performances are identical with those of Eglinton. Hence, when Eglinton wrote to me as follows:—

6, Nottingham Place, W.  
June 10th, 1886.

DEAR MR. DAVEY,

On my return to England the other day from Russia, I was informed from a reliable source that Mrs. Sidgwick had stated at a recent meeting of the Society for Psychical Research, that she knew perfectly well how to produce the phenomena of slate-writing, having been shown how to do so by a gentleman who had had several sésances with me, and who had discovered the "trick." Your name was mentioned as her informant.

As I do not believe this myself, as being directly opposed to what you have both written and told me, viz., that you *could* produce writing to some extent, but only when everything was prepared (as, for instance, the trick slate sold in the shops for 5s.) and not at all under the same conditions as myself, I shall be glad if you will tell me whether I am rightly informed as to your having given Mrs. Sidgwick the instruction into the mysteries of slate-writing.—Believe me, yours very truly,

W. EGLINTON.

I felt justified in replying :—

June 14th, 1886.

DEAR MR. EGLINTON,

I have received your letter of the 10th inst., which, owing to my absence from home on a short holiday trip, has not been answered before.

With regard to your question, it is quite untrue I have ever instructed anyone in the *modus operandi* of your slate-writing. Hoping your health is better for your tour in Russia, believe me, yours very truly,

S. J. DAVEY.

I need scarcely remind my readers that Mrs. Sidgwick had never made any such statement as Eglinton asserts he had obtained from a reliable source.

Similarly, in a letter which I wrote to Eglinton on Aug. 2, 1886, I said :

Spiritualism for some time past has ceased to interest me, as I now regard the subject in a different light owing to certain circumstances having come to my knowledge. I have before stated to you that I have never acted as an exposé of your "slate-writing."

The publication of the above leads me to explain the chief reason for my desiring temporarily that my identity with Mr. A., the "amateur conjurer," should not be proclaimed. Until recently I had not endeavoured myself to obtain written reports from persons who sat with me, and I was desirous of obtaining them under as nearly as possible the same conditions, as regards the mental attitude of the sitters, as those obtained by professional mediums for slate-writing; I did not wish people to know with absolute certainty by my own professions beforehand, that the slate-writing was only conjuring, though I urged them to treat me as a conjurer, to use tests, and take precautions against trickery, &c. In consequence of the prominence given in certain quarters to my name in connection with slate-writing, I assumed the professional name of David Clifford. The desirability of this step may be illustrated by the following incident: A short time ago, at a séance, I met a gentleman who spoke in very disparaging tones of the performances of a certain amateur conjurer known as Mr. A., and who remarked to the effect that the statements of Mrs. Sidgwick as to this conjurer's powers did not in the least explain the subject of "psychography." At the conclusion of my performance this same gentleman (who knew me only under the name of Clifford) declared in my presence and in that of his co-investigators that the experiments he had just witnessed were more conclusive as to the existence of supernatural phenomena than those he had witnessed in the presence of a well-known professional medium. Had he then known I was Mr. A., the "amateur conjurer," I do not think he would

have shown such enthusiasm as regards the "incomparable" nature of my phenomena.

I have now various reports, some of which relate to séances given under my real name, others to those given under my professional name, and I have done my best to get the sitters, when there were more than one, to write out their accounts independently. Few persons would imagine how difficult it is for ordinary witnesses to accurately record a slate-writing séance, even if they are very careful and quick observers; and how prone the majority of witnesses are to exaggerate or distort records of events which they believe to be of an abnormal character.

I think it would be no easy task to expose an expert in slate-writing, provided he had made up his mind not to give his investigators the chance of doing so. A practised conjurer in this particular branch of his profession soon acquires a sufficiently keen insight into character to know when there is no risk of detection. If the performer has any reason to think that any part of his trick will be seen, he can take refuge in a blank séance; nor would it generally be the case that if the trick were partly performed the observance of strict conditions by the sitter would result not merely in failure, but in exposure, as Mr. Massey seems to suggest. (*Proceedings*, Part X., pp. 93, 94.) I have, several times, had to deal with this danger, and have always been successful. Of course, cases will arise when, if the right steps are taken by the sitter, exposure will result; and this is precisely what has happened on more than one occasion, with, for example, Dr. Slade. There is one danger to which I think a conjurer is liable, unless he is very careful, viz., to give too little credit to the shrewdness of a sitter, just as he probably often gives too much. The remedy obviously would be to increase the number of entirely blank séances. If I were forced to give blank séances to persons of whose keenness I was afraid, I should, of course, frequently give blank séances to others whom I had no reason to fear, and with whom I could produce marvellous phenomena whenever I liked. I have found, moreover, that a blank sitting occasionally, with an investigator who at other times gets good results, makes the phenomena look more mysterious than ever, and forms an additional reason in his mind for not attributing the phenomena to conjuring. A plan, I understand, that is very frequently adopted by a well-known American medium, is to simulate sometimes, in a very marked manner, the appearance of trickery in his slate-writing. Not unfrequently one of his investigators falls into the trap, observes what he supposes is a clear case of deception, and demands an instant exposure of the slate. The medium then protests against the "unwarrantable suspicion," and finally reveals the slate, to the chagrin of his would-be exposé, who of course finds it perfectly clean. Then, by a subtle process, the medium

does write on the slate, to the subsequent amazement of his witness. From the account of a recent exposure by a lady Spiritualist in America, who detected Slade in the very act of writing, I understand that the speed with which he wrote on a slate held under the table greatly astonished the observer. I have good authority for believing that the account is to be relied upon. (See *New York Sunday Times*, July 5th, 1885.)

I may now briefly refer to the argument that "psychography" must be of an abnormal (or supernormal) character, since conjurers have been unable to explain the phenomena. My own opinion, as that of an amateur conjurer, has been claimed in its favour, but I have already pointed out that this is only a misrepresentation of the facts of the case, and that I was a deficient observer, and an ignoramus as regards conjuring, when I wrote the reports favourable to Eglinton. At the same time, I understand that certain conjurers have professed their inability to explain the slate-writing of some mediums by conjuring. But, after my own experiences, I am not at all surprised at this. That the testimony of a specially skilled conjurer *in this particular branch* is of value I do not deny, yet at the same time it does not, I think, follow that he must therefore know all the secrets, such as one with more experience might have acquired. If he is very confident of his own ability to find out any trick and cannot explain the *modus operandi* of the medium, he may possibly think it inexplicable by conjuring; and the remarks made by Mrs. Sidgwick at the close of her article in the *Journal* for December are particularly suitable to a case of this kind. A very good instance of this has come under my notice.

When Eglinton was in Calcutta, Mr. Harry Kellar, a professional conjurer, requested the "opportunity of participating in a séance, with a view of giving an unbiassed opinion as to whether," in his "capacity of a professional prestidigitateur," he could "give a natural explanation of effects said to be produced by spiritual aid." Eglinton eventually met Mr. Kellar, and the result was that Mr. Kellar came away utterly unable to explain by any natural means the phenomena that he witnessed; and he said that the writing on the slate, "if my senses are to be relied on, was in no way the result of trickery or sleight of hand." This occurred early in 1882, and Mr. Kellar's opinion still continues to be quoted in favour of the genuineness of Eglinton's phenomena. Yet I am not aware that Mr. Kellar, before sitting with Eglinton, had any special knowledge of the different methods of producing slate-writing by conjuring, and I have little doubt, after reading his account of a sitting in 1882, quoted in *Light*, October 16th, 1886, p. 481, that he was ignorant of at least some of these methods. But this does not seem to be my own view only; it seems to be that of Mr. Kellar himself,

who since then has apparently turned his attention to slate-writing, and has changed his former opinion about the genuineness of the phenomena; he now professes to be able to "duplicate any performance given by mediums of whatever nature after he has seen it done three times." This was mentioned to me by an American gentleman whom I met recently, but I have also seen a notice of it in *Light* for March 28th, 1885, p. 147, from which I have taken the above extract; yet Mr. Kellar's former opinion, given, as I presume, when he was not a special expert in slate-writing, is continually quoted by Spiritualists, just as my own opinion, given when I was absolutely incompetent and knew next to nothing about conjuring in any form whatever, has been quoted as the opinion of a specially qualified conjurer.

I do not myself place much value upon the opinion of conjurers who have not previously become thoroughly versed in the ways of deceiving sitters in slate-writing; not only because of this incident in which perhaps Mr. Kellar's over-confidence in his own powers of detection led him into a mistake, although he has after long experience publicly proclaimed his disbelief in "mediumistic" phenomena, but also because I have myself been able to deceive a gentleman accomplished in general conjuring.

On August 26th, 1886, I received a letter from a well-known professional conjurer, whose programme includes several *exposés* of alleged spiritualistic frauds. In his letter to me this gentleman\* informed me that he had heard a great deal about my slate-writing, and was most anxious to witness the phenomena, as he had had séances with a well-known professional medium; and he politely requested an interview with me. He was a stranger to me personally, but I at once offered to give him a séance, which was arranged for September 13th, 1886. At the conclusion of the séance† he gave me his testimony as follows:—

September 13th, 1886.

I can see no explanation by trickery of the experiments in slate-writing I have seen performed by Mr. Davey this evening.

(Signed)—————

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\* I have not here disclosed the name of this gentleman as, since I have informed him of my conjuring powers, he has desired me not to do so. His letter and testimony are in the hands of the Editor of the *Journal*.

† I had a curious experience with this gentleman. I asked him to think of a number. A number which I thought would be right was then, without his knowledge, marked on the slate by my process. I then asked him to tell me the number he had thought of. He said 98. I lifted up the slate and showed him the figures 98 that had been written before he had spoken. This may of course have been merely an odd coincidence, but the fact that I have had several somewhat similar experiences with other investigators led me to think that there might be something of the nature of thought-reading in it. I endeavoured to arrange some further experiments with Mr. —, but his many engagements, and recently my serious illness, have prevented our meeting again.



Some days afterwards he wrote to me as follows:—

September 24th, 1886.

It gives me much pleasure to add my testimony to that of many others you have, and I certainly can state that in some mysterious manner which to me seemed quite inexplicable, writing appeared on slates which I had purchased myself, which had been previously thoroughly *washed*, and while they were held together apparently very tightly. And it was specially remarkable that the writing was in the very colour I asked for.

(Signed)—————

Another professional conjurer was shown my locked slate by an investigator, the writing having been allowed to remain, and on hearing the account of the witness, he offered an explanation, which was, however, entirely wrong; I instance his opinion merely for the sake of pointing out that his great knowledge of conjuring in general did not enable him to suggest an explanation which would I think have occurred to him if he had been skilled in the various special methods that may be used by conjurers in connection with slate-writing.

It has sometimes happened that an investigator, who knew beforehand that my performances were conjuring, has thought he had obtained a clue to my methods, but in nearly every case where I have suspected this, I think his discovery has only tended to perplex him more than ever. Whilst visiting Professor Sidgwick at Cambridge some few months ago, I gave both Professor Sidgwick and Mrs. Sidgwick two sances for slate-writing. Amongst other phenomena, I obtained an answer on my locked slate, written underneath the question Professor Sidgwick had written. I had requested Professor Sidgwick to keep special charge of the slate. He afterwards concluded I had obtained some means of opening and writing on it, and he informed me as to when and how he thought I had done this. It is interesting to note that I did not in any way perform the trick in the manner Professor Sidgwick surmised, as I have since proved to him; he has informed me that my explanation was "completely unexpected," and he says:

"I was so satisfied with my own conjecture (difficult as it was for me to imagine it actually realised) that the method you actually used never occurred to me—nor anything at all like it."

To those of my readers who are specially interested in the subject, I may recommend a book entitled *The Bottom Facts of Spiritualism*,\* by Mr. John W. Truesdell, who seems to have had considerable experience in slate-writing. He gives an interesting account in Chapter XVI. of a slate-writing sance recorded by Mr. L. W. Chase, of Cleveland, Ohio, and I have no doubt after my own experiences as a

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\* Published by Carleton and Co., New York; and London: S. Low and Co.

producer of slate-writing that Mr. Truesdell's subsequent version of the matter is the true one. In the *Daily Courier* of Syracuse, New York, December 7th, 1872, Mr. L. W. Chase made the following statements :—

“The medium (Mr. John W. Truesdell) then took up a common slate, and, after carefully washing off either side, placed it flat upon the table, with a bit of pencil, about the size of a pea, underneath. We then joined hands, and after the lapse of about ten minutes, under the full glare of gas-light, we could distinctly see the slate undulate, and hear the communication that was being written, a copy of which I herewith append :—‘My dear Brother,—You strive in vain to unlock the hidden mysteries of the future. No mortal has faculties to comprehend infinity.—CHARLOTTE.’

“The above lines were not only characteristic of my beloved sister while in the form, but the handwriting so closely resembled hers that, to my mind, there cannot be a shadow of doubt as to its identity.”

In reference to a further event, Mr. L. W. Chase adds :—

“A short communication from my mother (and in her own handwriting) was found plainly written.”

I have quoted the above extracts since they serve to show how a person may be deceived in the matter of spirit identity ; for Mr. John W. Truesdell, at the close of Chapter XVI., frankly informs his readers that he himself wrote the messages, and describes the methods he employed. The resemblance between the handwritings was, I presume, imaginary.

The fact that “messages” occasionally contain private family details, &c., is often quoted as a proof of the Spiritualistic theory in connection with slate-writing, but many persons would be surprised to find how frequently a slate-writing conjurer may become possessed of apparently private matters in connection with his investigators, and they should also not forget that peculiar chance coincidences sometimes occur. It is not very long since I met a gentleman who was a perfect stranger to me personally, and I depicted scenes to him that I knew had taken place many years ago, with an accuracy that utterly bewildered him, and I went into such private details of his family matters as convinced him I had a strange insight into his past life. Yet this was merely due to a chance coincidence. Some months previously to me by a person well acquainted with his history, and although he was not a public character, his name, in connection with the events of which I had heard, became somehow fixed in my memory. Nor is this the only experience I have had of a somewhat similar character.

Then it must be borne in mind that when witnesses become deeply impressed with the wonder of the performance, they not unfrequently give way to a little natural excitement, and whilst they

have laboured under the excitement I have picked up items of information from the witnesses themselves, which when reproduced by me at future sésances have been declared "wonderful tests."

During the past few months I have given sésances to many total strangers who have applied to me for sittings. In some cases I have given these performances away from my own residence, and I have requested the investigators to use all possible caution to guard against any trickery, leaving them, however, to make their own suppositions concerning the mode of production of the phenomena. Latterly I have stipulated that the sitters should write out reports as soon as possible afterwards; and upon receiving these reports I have informed them without delay that the phenomena were only conjuring. Formerly in some cases I had given the sittings over and over again to the same persons, with an occasional blank to stimulate their curiosity; nevertheless they never detected the *modus operandi*.

I shall now give some of the accounts\* that I have received, but before doing so I wish my readers to be clearly aware that the writing performances described in the following records were due to my own unaided powers as a slate-writing conjurer.

I shall begin by quoting a few brief statements of a general kind merely in illustration of the impressions left upon some of those from whom I did not exact a detailed report.

*Statement of MRS. JOHNSON.*

My sisters and I being most interested in the subject of slate-writing and anxious to see something of it, Mr. Davey kindly arranged a meeting at his house. We sat at an ordinary table in a well-lighted room, and writing was quickly produced on the inner surface of one of two slates held firmly together, once by Mr. Davey and myself, at other times by my sisters and Mr. Davey; at first just under the edge of the table, then above, and afterwards on one of my sister's shoulders. This was the more wonderful as we had purchased the slates on our way from the station. Of course between the slates were placed three points of different coloured chalks, *after which*† Mr. Davey asked us in which colour the writing should appear, and it did so in the colour we elected, the slate being covered with writing. We are all quite certain that the slates were never out of the hands of one or other of us, and we are totally unable to account for the slate-writing.

M. JOHNSON.

*Statement of MR. SCOBELL.*

November 25th, 1886.

DEAR SIR,—

I had the pleasure of attending a sésance given by you some few months ago, and beg to relate what took place to the best of my recollection.

\* The originals of all the following accounts, together with the names and addresses of the writers, have been sent to the Editor of the *Journal*.

† These words added by Mrs. Johnson later.—S. J. D.

First, you produced a framed slate which folded, and upon which there was a patent lock. You opened the slate, cleaned it perfectly free from writing, put two or three pieces of crayon or pencil therein, locked it up, and placed the key in the hands of one of my daughters, who was present. The slate was laid on the table, and the hands of all of us were placed on and around it. You then told us to think of some subject upon which we should like a few lines, and to say the colour in which we should like them to appear. This was left to one of my daughters. You then appeared to be invoking the aid of some unknown person, which appeared to be attended with considerable mental agitation to yourself, and a slight scratching was heard, and upon the slate being finally unlocked and opened, two or three lines of writing appeared therein, and they were upon the subject my daughter had lent her mind, and in the colour writing desired by us.

The next thing you did was to solicit us to take out any volume from your bookcase, turn to a page, and fix our special attention on a passage. This I did without your seeing the page or passage. The book was handed to you, and you in a short time told us the right page and right paragraph.

I can only say that my daughters and myself were perfectly astonished with your performance, and had we been predisposed to believe in Spiritualism, we should have been convinced in such belief through your séance, as the whole performance seemed to us a phenomenon incapable of any explanation and not to be produced by any ordinary natural means.—Yours faithfully,

R. W. SCOBELL.

Mr. S. Davey, Jun.

*Statement of MRS. BARRETT.*

Your wonderful performance on the slate completely puzzled me. I have not got over it yet. Thinking over it as much as ever I can, I am as far off having any idea about it as at first. You say you did the writing, so I suppose you did; but how? That is what I want to know. You gave me a clean slate without a mark or scratch of any kind upon it. I examined it carefully, I sponged it with water, and at your desire I locked it up and kept my eye upon it. When it was unlocked and the slate examined, I discovered, to my astonishment, that it was written all over from top to bottom. I never lost sight of the locked slate, and I never lost sight of you; and as far as I could judge, it was impossible for you or any one present to have done it; yet the wonderful fact remains; the slate was perfectly clean when it was locked up, and written all over when unlocked. This is a mystery, and as I am unable to look through a wooden cover, I cannot imagine a clue to it. Perhaps some of these days you will enlighten me.

*Statement of MISS STIDOLPH.*

I have much pleasure in recording my recollections of a séance with Mr. S. J. Davey. His powers are certainly marvellous, and while I have not the very smallest belief in "Spiritualism" or "mediums" of any kind, believing the things so called to be gross deceptions, I was amazed at my friend's scientific skill. Apparently he has no appliances. I was seated with him at a small

table when he gave me the following astounding evidence of his powers. He gave into my hands a slate which, when locked, looks like an ordinary box. This box I opened, washed the slate, locked it, and took the key; for some minutes we sat, he with one hand on mine, his other hand on the table. Presently a faint scratching was heard, and continued some little time; when it ceased Mr. Davey unlocked the slate, and lo! it was covered with clear, distinct writing—a letter addressed to myself, and stating if I would wait a little while the writer would go to the Cape and bring me news of my brother. Then I again washed the slate; again it was locked, and again I kept the key. Mr. Davey then asked me to take any volume I liked from the library, to look at a page and remember the number of it. This I did, and again we sat as before. In a few moments the slate was unlocked, when on it was written, not only the number of the page I had thought of, but some of the words which were on the self-same page, and these not ordinary words, but abstruse words, as the book I selected was a learned one. This I considered a most marvellous feat, and utterly incomprehensible. That the scientific researches of my friend will lead to most important results I have no doubt. His aim is to expose deception, and if this object be attained he will benefit society and throw light on a subject which has hitherto been considered to belong exclusively to the “powers of darkness.”

E. STIDOLPH.

I would mention that the shelves from which I took the book contained hundreds of volumes, and Mr. Davey had no idea which I had selected as he closed his eyes and went to the extreme end of the room.

E. S.

November 25, 1886.

Proceeding now to more detailed accounts I will next quote from a report by Miss J. H. Symons of one of her séances with me. The description of the incident of the writing on the locked slate is important from several points of view, and I shall refer to it in a future paper in connection with other incidents described by Miss Symons.

Slate-writing séance, November 16th, 1885, at 14, Dean's-yard, with Mrs. Sidgwick, and a medium whom I will designate as A.

Our sitting commenced at 7.45 p.m. We took our places round a deal table in the following order:—The medium A at one corner, next him Mrs. Sidgwick, and I opposite.

Neither Mrs. Sidgwick nor I had brought any slates, and we were, therefore, obliged to use those brought by A. We sat in a good light, a lamp and several candles were burning in different parts of the room. We first washed the slates ourselves with water brought us by Mr. Podmore, so that there was no question of its containing any admixture of chemicals, by which means writing might be produced, as has sometimes been suggested to me; the table, too, was above suspicion, having just been bought by Mr. Podmore for this particular séance. After each one of us had separately washed and dried the slates, one was marked by Mrs. Sidgwick, a piece of pencil was placed on it, and it was held by A. under the table, who warned us to watch him very carefully, as he gave no promise *not* to cheat, did we

give him the faintest opportunity for so doing, and who wished us distinctly to understand that he did not claim to produce the phenomena he hoped to show us, by spirit agency. Prior to placing the ordinary slate under the table, we had washed and examined a small double folding slate, also belonging to the medium. This slate was locked by Mrs. Sidgwick, who put the key in her purse, and the purse in her pocket, and who sat upon the slate.

\* \* \* \* \*

We next tried for writing on the locked slate. I must remark here that though we had sat on this slate during the greater part of the séance, we had not done so throughout. We had left it on the chair when we turned to the candles behind us to read the message. A. had quickly picked it up, and asked us not to lose sight of it, as he wished to preclude all possibility of fraud. He might, of course, in this moment have changed the slate for one on which a message was already written, but the nature of the test we obtained, I think, negatives this supposition; besides which, before it was held under the table, Mrs. Sidgwick gave me the key, we unlocked the slate, found no writing there, and after the slate was again locked, I put the key in my pocket.

It was not proposed by A. that we should try to obtain a line from a page of any book to be taken at random from Mr. Podmore's shelves. This was done by Mrs. Sidgwick, who took care only—at A.'s request—to select a book with good type. This book was shown to A., who opened it, looked at the type, and considered it sufficiently clear. Mrs. Sidgwick placed it on the table, and her and my hands rested on it, whilst A. and I held the small locked slate under the table. It was at this point, after choosing her book, that the slate had been opened, found clean, and the key given to me. It was decided that Mrs. Sidgwick should think of the page of the book from which the line was to be taken, and I of the line, counting from the top of the page, it being agreed—at A.'s wish—that to facilitate the test, we should each think of a number below 10.

Again, so far as I could see, we gave A. no opportunity for changing the slate. I am quite certain that he did not do so whilst we were holding it together. And in this case the message must have been written *in our presence*, as we did get a line copied from this very book, though not the line of which we were thinking. When the slate was again unlocked, we found writing on each side; the message was to the effect that we were not sufficiently *en rapport* with one another to get the best results as yet, but that they were willing to give us some proof of their power. Then followed a few words in inverted commas, after which an illegible word, with which the message broke off abruptly. Mrs. Sidgwick then explained that she had been thinking of page 9, and I had thought of line 4. Mrs. Sidgwick quickly turned to this page and line, but no such words as those quoted were to be found. A. suggested that the 9 in Mrs. Sidgwick's mind might have been reversed and wrongly read as 6. We, therefore, turned to page 6, and on the last line of that page and the first line of page 7, we found the words for which we were looking.

In this case—admitting the genuineness of the phenomenon—there might again have been thought-transference, for the book had been in both Mrs.

Sidgwick's and A.'s hand, and either might have caught sight of these very words. With this the séance ended, as A. expressed himself too tired to sit any longer, and complained of a very bad headache. He seemed to suffer much after each message had been produced, and complained of great dryness of the throat.

JESSIE H. SYMONS.

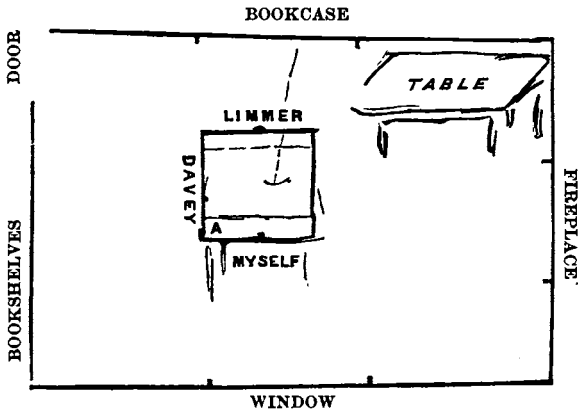
Nov. 19th, 1885.

The following reports are by Mr. J. H. Rait and Mr. Hartnall J. Limmer. These accounts were written independently, from notes taken during the sitting. Mr. Limmer had had a successful séance with me some months previously.

*Report of Mr. RAIT.*

On Wednesday evening, the 8th September, 1886, at 7.30, I betook myself, in answer to a previous invitation, to the residence of Mr. S. J. Davey. I had brought with me at his request three new common school slates privately marked by me and of medium size, a box of assorted crayons, and a book to take notes in. Arrived there I was introduced to Mr. Limmer, who with Mr. Davey and myself formed the trio in whose presence the manifestations which I am about to record took place.

At 8.30 p.m. we seated ourselves as shown in the diagram. Mr. Limmer



A. This is where the Slate was held.

sat directly opposite me, while Mr. Davey sat on my left, the gas burner being directly overhead so as to distribute light equally on all surroundings. Before I begin, however, I will call attention to the following facts.

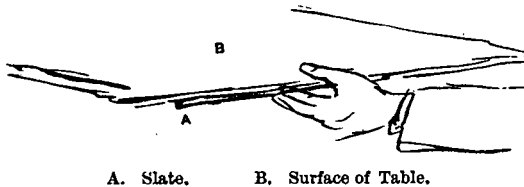
1. During the whole séance, the gas, with but one slight exception, was burning brightly.
2. The slates used were the 3 already mentioned and a double one of Mr. Davey's of superior make, with ebony backs and fitted with a lock, which, after having cleaned it and inserted a small fragment of slate pencil, I locked, and at his request put it in the pocket of my coat, where it remained till used. With these slates there could not possibly be any tampering as during the whole séance they never for one moment left the room.

3. While the writing was taking place under the table Mr. Davey's left hand was held by Mr. Limmer while his right with the exception of the tops of his 4 fingers was full in my view.

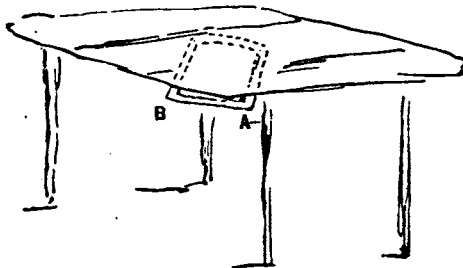
4. The chalks used were my own, wrapped separately in paper, and before the séance had never been taken out of the box.

5. A fact that appears to me most wonderful is, that the point of the slate pencil or crayon was always worn and invariably formed part of the last stroke.

At Mr. Davey's request I took one of my new slates, cleaned, wiped it, and placed a minute fragment of slate pencil on its surface, and held it under the table at the corner of the table with my left hand pressing it firmly all



A. Slate. B. Surface of Table.



The dotted lines show that part of the Slate under the Table.  
A. Extremity held by me. B. Held by Davey.

the time. Mr. Limmer held my right on one side and Mr. Davey's left on the other, while Mr. Davey also supported the slate under the table with his right; thus it will be seen that a chain was formed by the hands. After remaining a few seconds thus.

Mr. Davey: "Are you there?" No answer.

Mr. D.: "Are you going to give us any answer this evening?" A distinct ticking sound was here heard and after 3 seconds or so it stopped and I withdrew the slate; on it was an imperfect scrawl which no one could decipher.

Mr. D.: "We will try again; please hold the slate firmly; engage in conversation; try and not concentrate the thoughts too much on one subject."

Mr. D.: "Are you going to give us any answers this evening or not? Now *do* try." This time the noise of the ticking of a pencil was most distinctly heard as if firmly and deliberately writing. I called Mr. Limmer's attention to the fact and he informed me the writing was distinctly audible to him. I withdrew the slate and on it distinctly written was *Yes*.

Mr. D.: "Will some one now ask a question?"



After some thought it occurred to me to ask what o'clock it was at present, there being no timepiece in the room.

Mr. D. : "Will you kindly tell us what time it is?" The ticking was *immediately* resumed. I watched Mr. Davey while seemingly talking to Mr. Limmer, but could detect nothing suspicious in his movements; three distinct ticks were heard and I put the slate on the table and examined it. It was written in the same indistinct hand, and began with a scrawl, but in the middle of the sentence I could decipher "nine" plainly. On asking Mr. Limmer to look at his watch he replied that it wanted a quarter of an hour to 9. On putting the question "Will there be a war with Russia?" we got the vague reply "*Perhaps.*" In reply to other questions the answers obtained were "*try chalk*" (this refers to the difficulty experienced in distinctly writing on a new slate) and "*answer later.*"

So far nothing striking had occurred beyond very scrawly writing, and replies which might mean anything; but something better was in store for us.

I now suggested a slight variation in the experiment, which both Mr. Limmer and Mr. Davey agreed to. I will mention however that in the right-handed breast pocket of my coat I had placed a sealed envelope containing some questions of a most impossible nature, and which I had written on the afternoon of the 7th September, intending to produce them at the séance with a view to getting them answered; they being all the time in the envelope and their contents unknown to anyone but myself. I determined therefore to put the question, "What does the right-handed breast pocket of my coat contain?"

Requested by Mr. Davey to clean and again privately mark my slates, I did so; and at his request Mr. Limmer and I chose 3 fragments of chalk,—pink, green, and blue. These 3 fragments were placed on the surface of one of the slates. I then placed another slate on the top of this so that the chalks were between. This time the slates were *above the table*; we joined hands and began talking, the question concerning my coat pocket having been put. It is important to note that during this experiment both of Mr. Davey's hands were in view, also that the writing began almost instantaneously on joining hands. Mr. Davey became very agitated, his hands slightly trembled under mine, and he occasionally gasped for breath as though in pain. (These fits occurred at intervals throughout the séance and always when the writing was taking place, but on no occasion did he move either his hands or feet.) The writing distinctly continued, cool, deliberate, and steady. I could even hear the occasional dashes as in stroking the t's, &c.; it invariably seemed to come, away from Mr. Davey, immediately underneath my fingers. I could almost feel the chalk as it moved along in its weird progress, guided by what mysterious agency I know not.

All at once Mr. Davey said, "Quick!! in what colour will you have it written?" Pink was chosen. This is what appeared on lifting one slate off:—

DEAR SIR,—This experiment is a very difficult one, and we can but rarely repeat it. (In green) You may rest assured that we shall do all in our power to answer (in blue) you this evening, but we are very anxious that you

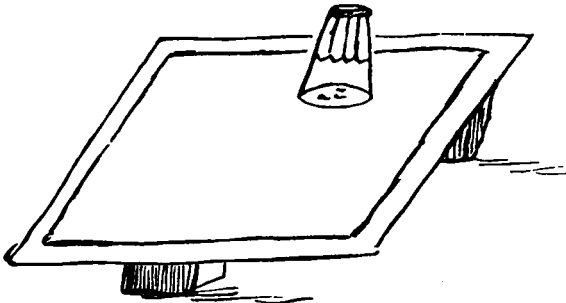
—not—this question (in pink) simply on account of the—question we will try and answer your question later on—and the—endeavour to convince—any test you may suggest.


ERNEST.

The latter part written in pink. Part of the message we could not decipher, and I accordingly cannot repeat it in full. This message occupied about 2 minutes or less in writing, and was on the whole fairly well written.

The next experiment was with Mr. Davey's closed slate. After it had been produced from my pocket we laid it on the table locked and with the small piece of pencil inside, joined hands as before and the question was put, "Will the Emperor of Germany live through the present year?" Immediately the writing began, exactly the same as on previous occasions, and when after the space of 4 minutes (about) I carefully unlocked the slate we found the following wonderful message: "My Dear Sirs,—It is a popular error that if we can produce this writing under these conditions we might at the same time have a knowledge upon all questions of a mundane nature. One is apt to forget that prophet seer and prophetess are children all of 'mother guess,' and this rule applies to us. Yet for ourselves we can foresee much to happen in the year 1889, and to do this we need but carry out the instructions of Bonnet (?) who said, 'Ne vous laissez jamais d'examiner les causes des grands changements, puisque rien ne servira jamais tant à votre instruction.' Your test is a severe one, for we have not the gift of clairvoyance to-night. On VII — we think (or thank) your friend from time to time in explanation of this mystery try your test again later on and we shall succeed. We hope to—" (here the writing ends). This is clearly a direct reply to all our questions, and "the severe test" referred to points, evidently to my *coat pocket's contents*. What the mysterious VII. means I do not know, except that it may have some allusion to the 7th September, the day on which I wrote the questions. This belief is strengthened by the answer we got in trying to find out the writing after the Roman letters VII. later on in the evening, and which read (as much as we could make out of it) *Septem*. This long message was to my mind the most marvellous result of all, and its effect was strongly marked on Mr. Davey, who seemed in a state of great prostration, and called for a glass of water.

Mr. Davey then placed a slate on two small boxes which rested on the table, thus; 3 pieces of chalk,—blue, pink, and red—were then chosen and



placed on its surface (the slate) and over the chalk was placed a tumbler ; the gas was slightly lowered, and we were told to say what figure we would like to have drawn. I chose an octagon, Mr. Limmer chose a square. I saw a piece of chalk slightly move and on lifting the glass we saw two very indistinct marks. We however resolved to try again. This time the red piece of chalk distinctly moved, but very quick. Lifting the tumbler we found this figure  which evidently was intended for part of Mr. Limmer's

square.

I desired after this to have the writing on the double slate of Mr. Davey's continued at the point where it had been broken off, and obtained this result on one of my slates which I held underneath the table and which began immediately. "We hope to see you again—Joey." I was also anxious to know what the VII signified as I have already said before ;—on the first attempt we got the answer—"good-bye Joey"—but we were more successful on again putting the question, the result being a distinct "Septe——"; whether, as I have already said, it was intended for September I cannot tell.

As it was getting late (10.30) the séance concluded. In finishing this statement I will add that for my part I am "an outsider," have never before given slate-writing or Spiritualism a thought until Mr. Davey lent me "Psychography" and a copy of *Light* dated 8th November, 1884, and invited me to relate my experiences as they appeared to my senses of sight and hearing only ; which I have endeavoured to do in as complete a manner as possible. What the agency is that moves the fragment of pencil I know not ; I leave that for the *savants*. It is a wonderful thing that part of an answer was written in French, a language totally unknown to Mr. Davey. Also that 3 colours were employed in writing another answer. Trickery to my mind is utterly impossible in *any* respect. How it is all done I cannot tell ; my advice to the "sceptics" is "go and judge for yourselves."

JOHN H. RAIT.

10/9/86.

#### *Report of Mr. LIMMER.*

On Friday, the 8th September, 1886, I had the privilege of being present at a "Spiritualistic" séance given by Mr. S. J. Davey at his residence . . . Mr. Herbert Rait . . . was the only other person present besides Mr. Davey and myself.

The only table used was a small one which Mr. Davey informed us was technically known as a "Pembroke." This table I thoroughly examined and nothing that could aid Mr. Davey in any way could I discover. The proceedings then commenced by placing a common slate, bought that evening and marked by Mr. Rait, under the corner of the table and supported in that position by the right and left hands of Mr. Davey and Mr. Rait respectively, while I completed the circle by holding their disengaged hands. The question "What is the time?" was then asked by Mr. Rait, and after a short interval I distinctly heard writing, but on looking at the slate the answer was not readable : the question was therefore repeated and shortly after the

word "nine" was obtained. The next question asked by Mr. Rait was "Will there be a war with Russia or not?" in reply to which we received the word "Perhaps." The same gentleman then asked "Will the Emperor of Germany live through the year?" Instead of receiving a direct reply the words "Try chalk" were found written upon the slate, and on adopting that suggestion we obtained the single word "later."

I may mention here that all the chalk and slates (with the exception of the "locked slate" mentioned later on in this report) used during the evening were brought by Mr. Rait, and had never been in the possession of Mr. Davey.

The next test was that of two common slates being placed upon the table, one above the other, the frames of which fitted so accurately that it appeared utterly impossible to insert anything by which the pencil could be put in motion. These slates were previously examined by Mr. Rait and myself. Green, pink, blue and red chalk having been inserted by Mr. Rait, the circle was again formed in the manner before described, Mr. Davey having this time, though, both hands placed upon the top slate. The question, "What does my right hand breast coat pocket contain?" was put by Mr. Rait, and it was agreed that the colour in which the answer should be written should be pink. I distinctly heard the chalk passing rapidly between the slates, and in about two minutes we had the following message before us.

(In pink)

"DEAR SIR,

"This experiment is a very difficult one, and we can but rarely repeat it. (In green.) You may rest assured that we shall do all in our power to answer (in blue) you this evening, but we are very anxious that you should not put this question (in pink again) (word not plainly written here) simply on a/c of the (word not readable) question. We will try and answer your question later on, and the (word not readable) endeavour to convince (word not readable) any test you may suggest.

"ERNEST."

At this stage of the proceedings Mr. Davey appeared to be rather exhausted, and drank a glass of water.


Mr. Davey then produced a "locked slate," which I examined most minutely, and as far as I was able to judge, the surfaces were genuine slate and had not undergone any process of preparation which would aid him in obtaining writing. A small crumb of pencil was inserted, and the slate closed and locked by Mr. Rait. The key was then given into my possession. We then placed our hands in an exactly similar position as before, and Mr. Rait having repeated the question "Will the Emperor of Germany live through the year?" I very soon heard the pencil travelling over the surface of the slate. After the lapse of about four minutes the slate was carefully unlocked by Mr. Rait, and the pencil very much worn was found at the place where the writing ended.

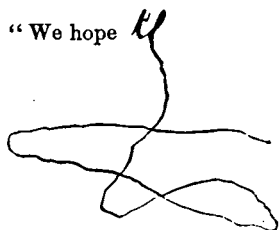
The lines on the first side of the slate ran in a diagonal direction from left to right, but on the second side it was done in the usual manner, i.e., from side to side. The writing was of a very neat character and the majority of the letters were well formed. The following is a copy of the letter.

“MY DEAR SIRS,—It is a popular error that if we can produce this writing under these conditions we might at the same time have a knowledge upon all questions of a mundane nature. One is apt to forget that ‘Prophet, seer, and prophetess are children all of Mother Guess’ and this rule applies to us, yet for ourselves we can foresee much to happen in in (the word ‘in’ occurred twice here) the year 1889 and to do this we need but carry out the instruction of Bonnet (this name was indistinct) who said ‘Ne vous laissez jamais d’examiner les causes des grands changements puisque rien servira jamais tant à votre instruction.’

\* “Your test is a severe one for we have not the gift of clairvoyance to-night on VII oz we think (or thank) your friend from time to time in explanation of this mystery.

“Try your test again later on and we shall succeed.


“We hope 



Saw Pencil lay here, on carefully opening the Slate.

The writing having stopped so abruptly, two ordinary slates were placed upon the table in the manner before described, and it was asked by Mr. Rait that the letter should be concluded. Within a period of 15 seconds from the time of asking such question and after completing the circle with our hands, the words “to see you again, Joey,” were written.

The two slates were again placed in the same position as before, and Mr. Rait having put an unimportant question, after the completion of the circle as before, I saw upon the slate “Good-bye, Joey”; but on a second trial a scrawl was obtained which looked very much like “Sept. Joey” but it was impossible to say definitely what it was intended for.

The final test to which Mr. Davey was subjected was that of writing under an inverted tumbler under the following conditions. An ordinary tumbler was inverted and placed upon one of the slates brought by Mr. Rait. This slate was raised slightly from the table and supported by two small boxes placed under the ends of the slate. Blue, pink, and red chalk were then placed under the glass by Mr. Rait, and after joining hands, Mr. Rait asked that an octagon should be formed with the red chalk. After waiting for a few minutes the red chalk was seen to make two short lines almost at right angles to one another, thus, . The same test, after the

slate had been cleaned, was repeated, and with precisely the same result. I

\* This probably refers to some questions which Mr. Rait had written and enclosed in a sealed envelope and placed in his breast coat pocket and known only to himself. It will be remembered he previously asked “What does my right-hand breast coat pocket contain?”

then asked that a square should be formed by the red chalk, and two sides of it were made almost instantly, and in the colour required. Although looking to within a few inches of the tumbler and seeing the pencil move I failed to discover anything which could have caused it to do so.

I can only say that the whole thing was totally inexplicable to me, and to the best of my belief it was impossible for Mr. Davey to have produced any of the above results by the aid of trickery, as he did not appear in any way to try to divert my attention either from himself or the slates, and I watched him as closely as it was possible throughout the whole proceedings.

HARTNALL J. LIMMER.

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The following report is by a lady whom I shall call Mrs. Y., whose husband is a member of the Council of the American Society for Psychical Research. I have the independent reports of Mr. Y. and Miss Y., and I propose to give these in a future paper.

*Report of Mrs.——— .*

On the evening of September 10th, 1886, I went with my husband and daughter to a room in Furnival's Inn, to witness the slate-writing performances of Mr. Clifford. On our way we stopped at a stationer's, and my husband purchased three perfectly new ordinary school slates. We found Mr. Clifford to be a young man of manifest intelligence and great earnestness of scientific purpose. He impressed me as being thoroughly honest and above all trickery. He also impressed me as being in a very critical state of health, and I should say the nervous strain of his slate-writing performances was most injurious to him.

We seated ourselves at an ordinary Pembroke table, brought out of the kitchen attached to the chambers belonging to the friend who had loaned his room for the occasion. A piece of chalk was placed on one of our slates, and the slate was held tightly up against the underside of the table leaf by one of Mr. Clifford's hands and one of my daughter's. Their thumbs were on top of the table, and their hands spread underneath on the underside of the slate. I held Mr. Clifford's other hand, and we all joined hands around the table. I watched the two hands holding the slate without a moment's intermission, and I am *confident* that neither Mr. Clifford's hand nor my daughter's moved in the least during the whole time. Two or three questions were asked without any sign of response. Then Mr. Clifford asked rather emphatically, looking hard at the corner of the table under which they were holding the slate, "*Will* you do anything for us?" After this question had been repeated three or four times, a scratching noise was heard, and on drawing out the slate a distinct "*Yes*" was found written on it, the chalk being found stationary at the point where the writing ceased. As my eyes were fixed uninterruptedly on both my daughter's hand and on Mr. Clifford's also, and as I certainly had fast hold of his other hand all the time, I feel *confident* he did not write this word in any ordinary way. This same result was obtained two or three times. But Mr. Clifford did not seem to think it was enough of a test, and he proposed that we should try

it with the slate on the table in full sight of us all, with a candle burning brightly in the middle of the table.

He gave me a locked slate of his own, which I thoroughly washed and locked myself, and put the key in my own pocket. We then joined hands, and Mr. C. and my daughter placed one hand each on the slate as it was lying on top of the table. Different questions were asked, and we waited some time, but no response came. Mr. Clifford seemed to me very much exhausted, and I urged him to desist from any further efforts. But he seemed loth to do this, and said he would rest a little while, and would then, perhaps, be able to go on. After a short time of conversation, the slates all the while being in full view and carefully watched by me, we again tried it, under the same conditions as before, only that this time Mr. C. requested us each to take a book at random from the shelves in the room, and mentally think of two numbers representing a page and a line, and he would see if he could reproduce it. This also failed of any result, and Mr. C. said he feared he was too tired to produce anything, as he had been very much exhausted by a long and very successful séance the night before. We again begged him to desist, but after a short rest, during which he walked into the next room for fresh air, I thought, he insisted on another trial. The slates still remained all the time in full view on the table. Mr. C. asked my daughter to choose another book, which she did at random, he having his back to her and standing at some distance while she did it. This book was at once tied up and sealed by one of the party, Mr. C. never touching it from first to last. I then held it in my lap, while we joined hands as before, and Mr. C. and my daughter each put one hand on the slate. Still nothing came. Then we changed positions, and I placed my hand on the slate instead of my daughter, giving her the book to hold. During this change she kept her hand on the slate until I had placed mine beside it, and the book was awaiting her on the opposite side of the table, my husband all the while holding Mr. C.'s other hand. I am *confident* that Mr. C. could not possibly have manipulated the slate during this change, for it was in full sight all the while, and our hands were on it, and the book was tied and sealed on the opposite side of the table. A few minutes after this readjustment Mr. C. seemed to have a sort of electric shock pass through him, the perspiration started out in great drops on his forehead, and the hand that was touching mine quivered as with a nervous spasm. At once we heard the pencil in the slate moving, and in a few moments Mr. Clifford asked me to unlock the slate. My daughter took the key out of her pocket and handed it across the table to me, and I unlocked the slate, and found it covered on both the inner sides with writing. When read, this writing proved to be a sort of essay or exhortation on the subject of psychical research, with quotations from the book chosen intermingled throughout. I forgot to say that Mr. C. had asked us *all* to choose in our minds two numbers under ten to represent a page and a line of the book, but had finally concentrated his thought on what my husband was thinking. In the writing there were quotations from every page we had any of us thought of, but not always the line; but in the case of my husband the line was correct, but not the page. He had thought of page 8, line 8. The line was quoted

from page 3, and Mr. C. said this confusion between 8 and 3 quite frequently occurred, because of the similarity of the numbers. This test seemed to me *perfect*. The slate was under my own eye on top of the table the whole time, and either my daughter's hand or my own was placed firmly upon it without the intermission of even a second. Moreover, we closed and opened it ourselves.

After a short rest, Mr. Clifford asked us to wash two of our own slates and put them together, with pieces of chalk of different colours between, and all of us to reach across the table and hold them all together. This we did, and then Mr. C. asked my husband to choose mentally three colours he wished used in writing. After all holding the slates closely pressed together for a few minutes, we placed them on the table, and Mr. C. and I placed our hands on them while the rest joined hands. In a few moments the same sort of electric shock seemed to pass through Mr. C., and his hand and arm which were on the slates quivered nervously, and immediately a scratching noise was heard. He then asked me to lift one slate off the other, which I did, and found one side covered with writing in three colours, the very three my husband had mentally chosen. I am perfectly confident that my hand was not removed from the slates for one single instant, and that I never lost sight of them for a moment.

By this time Mr. C. seemed to us to be so much exhausted that we begged him to give up any further tests, but he insisted on trying one more, which was as it proved the most remarkable of all.

He placed one of our slates on three little china salt-cellars that lifted it up about an inch from the table. Upon the middle of this he placed several pieces of different coloured chalks, and covered them with a tumbler. Then he told my husband to form a mental picture of some figure he wished to have drawn on the slate under the glass, and to name aloud the colour he would have it drawn in. He thought of a cross, and chose aloud the blue colour. I suggested that blue was too dark to be easily seen, and asked him to take white, which he agreed to. We sat holding hands and watching the pieces of chalk under the tumbler. No one was touching the slate this time, not even Mr. C. In a few minutes, Mr. C. was again violently agitated as with an electric shock, which went through him from head to foot, and immediately afterwards we *saw*, with our own eyes, each one of us, the pieces of chalk under the glass begin to move slowly, and apparently to walk of their own accord across the space of the slate under the tumbler. My husband had said just before that if the piece of red chalk under that tumbler moved, he would give his head to anyone who wanted it, so sure was he that it could not possibly move. The first piece of chalk that began to walk about was that very red piece! Then the blue and white moved simultaneously, as though uncertain which was the one desired. It was utterly astounding to all of us to see these pieces of chalk thus walking about under the glass with no visible agency to move them! All the while Mr. C., whose hands were held on one side by myself and on the other side by my husband, seemed to be on a great nervous strain, with hot hands and great beads of perspiration. When the chalks stopped moving, we lifted the tumbler, and there was a cross, partly blue and partly white, and a long red line marking the path



taken by the red chalk ! We were impressed by this test beyond the power of words to declare. The test conditions were perfect, and the whole thing took place under our eyes on top of the table with no hands of anybody near the slate. This was the close of the evening's performances.

Upon reading over my account I see that I have put the leaving of the room by Mr. C. in the wrong place. It should have been just before the writing on our slates with coloured chalks instead of just before the writing on the locked slate. But in either case the slates were all the time in full view on the table with the rest of us who remained behind.

I consider the test conditions to have been perfect throughout, and see no possible explanation for the very remarkable phenomena that occurred.

Mrs. ———

*September 14th, 1886.*

The sitting described by Mr. Legge in the following letter took place on the same evening as the séance described in the foregoing report by Mrs. Y., September 10th, 1886.

*Report of MR. LEGGE.*

*12th September, 1886.*

MY DEAR HODGSON,—

I said I would let you have a straightforward account of what I saw in your chambers on Friday evening ; here it is, written while my recollections are distinct. I had been sitting with Hughes, who told me you had a séance on. We were talking on various subjects, and never touched that of the séance going on in the next room, so that in fact I soon forgot all about it. Presently however the door opened, and you came in with Mr. —, whom I had never seen before, and behind him were his wife and daughter. A little embarrassed by sudden introductions, I passed out into the entry to your rooms, and there saw for the first time Clifford (the name, is it not?). In a few minutes the ———s left, and I went into the room where the séance had been. There I was introduced to Clifford, who suggested, after some talk on what had gone before, that I might like to see something.

I jumped at the proposal, and as a preliminary took Clifford's locked slate, opened it, and cleaned it (or rather cleaned it again, for it was clean already), then, having slipped in a bit of pencil, locked it, and put the key in my pocket, keeping the slate also in my hand or under my arm all the time afterwards. Next I chose one of your slates, cleaned it, and, at Clifford's request, having put a fragment of pencil upon it, slipped it under the table, so as just to cover it with the slab, the pencil of course being on the upper surface. The table was a plain deal one, and I satisfied myself that there were no projections on the under-surface which could leave a mark. We then formed contact, Clifford's right hand being partly on my left and partly on the slate, *i.e.*, where his hand overlapped mine which held the slate pressed against the table. The faint sound of writing was distinctly audible, and when it ceased I drew the slate out. There were merely indistinct scrawls upon it. But it appeared that I ought to have asked a question to myself, and so extracted an answer from the slate. So after I had cleaned the slate

I thought of a question. I acted precisely as before. The sound of writing was again heard, and the slate, when I drew it out, bore clearly and distinctly written the word "yes"—the final letter of which was done in particularly admirable style. The question had reference to some doubtful increase in my official salary, and I am bound to say I was as much delighted as astounded by the mysterious writing. The next experiment was the placing of 3 bits of coloured chalk on the table, and of a clean slate (selected and placed by myself) over them. I put my hand on the slate, Clifford his on mine, and we joined contact. Again we heard the sound of writing, and when I lifted the slate there was written large and neatly in the coloured chalks (three lines or so in each colour) this message:—"Don't you think I've done enough for you to-night I'm tired Joey." I noticed the chalks seemed worn, showing signs of work, just like the little bit of pencil in the previous experiment.

After this Clifford asked me to write a question in chalk on one of your slates. While I was writing it he asked for a drink of water, and you pointed to a corner of the room where there was some. He went there and when he came back seemed to have forgotten his request for he now asked me for the locked slate, which I had latterly put in my pocket. I brought it out, placed it on the table, set my hand on it, Clifford his on mine, and joined contact just as before with Hughes and yourself, Hughes holding my right and your left, you Clifford's left. Then we heard the same writing sound, very faint this time, and after a considerable interval I was told to take up the slate and unlock it. Taking the key out of my pocket I did so, and saw written on both leaves a long message, precisely as I give it:—"If you don't believe in spirit power after this you are not worth the attention of any honest medium (*sic*) Joey." After this, Clifford, who seemed pretty tired, had to rush off to catch a train. I should add that the room had been in full lamp light all the time, the lamp being placed on a side table thus throwing a certain light under as well as over the table we were sitting at. Also that the contact was not continuously perfect, for I remember that Hughes and yourself occasionally left one hand free for a short time, and lastly that there was no enforced silence.

The above are the facts as detailed as I can give them; I offer no comment on them for indeed I can't. Though I had heard of such experiments before, personal experience was entirely new to me, and has left me in immense perplexity.

If you see Clifford, please thank him for his kindness in troubling after an already long sitting to give me some specimens of his "craft," or whatever name one can give so nameless a faculty. I am also sincerely obliged to Hughes and yourself.—Yours,

J. G. LEGGE.

The next report is by Mr. Padshah. This gentleman had had some previous experience with a well-known medium, but had not been convinced that the phenomena which he had witnessed in the medium's presence were not the result of trickery. His account of his séance with me shows that he was in some respects a careful observer, and that

he was still more careful in recording his remembrances. I also append portions of the accounts given by Mr. and Mrs. Russell of the first part of the sitting.

*Report of MR. PADSHAH.*

1, Furnival's Inn, London.

Sept. 15, 1886.

This evening in Hodgson's room we had a séance with Mr. Clifford; Mr. and Mrs. Russell, Mr. F. S. Hughes, Hodgson and myself being the party. Before sitting I had some interesting conversation with Mr. C. about the results usually got by him and some which I had with Eglinton. Mr. C. in course of the conversation told me he was very anxious that his results should be tried and watched like those of any professional medium, and indeed, his subsequent proceedings were very agreeably contrasted with those witnessed at the professional séances. There was every apparent desire to get the conditions named by members of the party, and to see that results were obtained under those conditions. I had suggested in our preliminary conversation how important it might be to get my own name—not surname—which no one except myself in the room knew. The slates on which we desired the writings were three of them Hodgson's, three I had bought this evening at Lilley's, Cambridge, and one Mr. C.'s own double slate. I regret that desiring to add some friends to the party, I had left the rooms to call upon those friends, and during that interval, Hodgson and Mr. Hughes being busy, we necessarily could not keep the slates in our eye for a short interval during which Mr. C. was in the room.

Well, we commenced, I sitting all the time next to Mr. C., except once, when Mrs. Russell and I interchanged places, with no advantage; and so we resumed the original order. There was full light on every corner of the table; two of my (?) slates, one washed by myself, the other by Mr. C., were put very nearly in the centre with a number of small chalk-pieces between them of different colours—(five in all, I find now on inquiry from Hodgson—red, blue, green, yellow, white—but which I was *not* sure of, then, not having noticed them). Under the table with the frame projecting on Mr. C.'s side, was a single slate, also mine, I believe, and washed by I do not know whom, Mr. C. supporting it on his side by the four fingers underneath, and the thumb over the table in sight of all; his left hand joining with that of Mr. Russell's right, Mr. R.'s left with Mr. Hughes' right, Mr. Hughes' with Mr. Russell's, and Mrs. Russell's left with my right, all resting either on the table, or otherwise always in sight; and my left supporting also the slate just the same as Mr. C.

Between the slate and the table were put successively chalks and a small pencil, the chalks being crushed, and therefore given up. Mr. C. and Mr. Russell often put their hands on the pair of single slates. Mr. C.'s double slate, *not* washed, I believe, that I can remember, but locked up by myself carefully, with the key always in my pocket or on my right hand near Mrs. Russell, never out of my view, was in my charge, generally being behind my back. For some time there seemed to be no result, Mr. C. telling us that he felt no "go" in the thing, and asking me if it was not due to my undue sceptic-

ism. Of course I assured him that my failing was rather in the reverse direction. The conversation was generally on Spiritualistic subjects, being mostly a good-humoured discussion of the experiences of some Spiritualists. On Mr. C.'s asking me to select a particular colour of chalk to write between the two slates, I suggested white; but we never got it. He then wished me to fix my mind on a particular number. I selected five (5), and drew an image of it before my mental eye. The number we got was, however, 6; and I must say, that but for the horizontal stroke, I myself would be unable to distinguish often between my 5's and 6's. Mr. C. then asked if there were going to be any manifestations—the answer was legibly “yes.” Then we asked for a writing on one of the pair of slates, of mixed colours, mine being blue, and Mrs. Russell's selection red. *Sometimes* I think we all put our hands on the pair of slates, and then both Mr. C.'s hands were in full view, and there could be no mistake of what they were doing,—viz., that they were shaking sometimes with great force, at the same time that his teeth were chattering. However, before any writing came there as asked for, we had first a message on the single slate “Wait,” and at another time, I noticed (without any clear sound of writing as was unmistakeable during the two previous cases)—and I believe nobody had observed it before I drew their notice—a message on one side of the slate, “Try the (?) chalks.” Well, now we all concentrated our attention on the pair of slates very nearly in the centre; and I thought, as requested, of two numbers, 5, 7; Mr. C. very shortly after a deal of shaking of his hands, at length said that we might see the slates. There, to my surprise, I beheld a message forsooth, in two coloured pencils, —blue and red, which I copy below.

(Blue Pencil):

“We are very pleased to be able to give you this writing under these conditions, which must or ought at least to the ordinary mind do away with the possibility of it being produced by ordinary means.

(Red pencil):

“If you will be kind enough to wait patiently you may rest assured we will do our best to do more for you.

“EARNEST.”

I forgot to say that before this writing appeared, on the large slate, instead of the numbers we wanted, we got written “Boorzu.” Now this as it happens is the original Persian, the modern corruption of which is my initial name. This would be extraordinary except that it might have happened by accident and also I had not time enough to see the last “u” before the word was wiped off by Mr. C.

Then we tried to get some results with books, but as it appeared to me Mr. C. had read almost every book in Hodgson's library, it was not easy to select one to preclude the hypothesis of thought-transference. So we attempted to get numbers again, and I concentrated my attention on the same two previous numbers (5, 7); we soon got the 7 on the single slate, but instead of the 5, we got “Think Book.” Mr. C. desired me to think of one; my mind was unsettled between *The Brain as an Organ of Mind*, by Bastian,

and *International Law*, so to avoid any interference with the conditions, I pitched upon the periodical *Mind*. Mr. and Mrs. Russell having left us, we all concentrated our attention on the double closed slate, which, on opening at frequent intervals, we had found unwritten. The key was *now* in my pocket, *that* is certain, for on seeking to open it, I found it entangled with the coppers in my waistcoat pocket. The double slate was also undoubtedly locked, for I carefully locked it myself. I mentally, as before, concentrated my attention on getting the word "Mind" written within. After some time Hodgson said he heard the sound of writing, and on opening it we found the slate full. The following is the text :—

"This phenomenon is not Spiritualistic, nor is it the projection into objectivity through the higher faculties unfolded by the abnormal issues of human developments—'Mediumship'? Yes. But mediumship of WHAT? Do you think you could appreciate if we were to tell you? Ah no! The Spooks of one, the Adepts of another, the transcendental Egos of another, and the fourth dimensions of a fourth, are but the frantic struggling dreams of the dark and ignorant present human race who have not acquired the possibility of CONCEIVING even an approximation to the real solution.

"Your own predominant desire is *to explain*, but for these and kindred facts, it will be ages before the loftiest soul can touch the true *theory*, as we find it exhibiting no distinct changes of form, and if impossible with one or more vibration.

"The Brain AN organ of Mind, ha! we laugh."

This completes the text. I opened the slate myself, and I found some scratches made by the pencil over the writing. Also the facet seemed to have worn out a little by writing. After this we made some fruitless efforts at getting something, but we could not, and in a very short time we adjourned. As the table round which we sat was removed, Hodgson pointed out that it was beyond suspicion,—a fact which I had omitted to notice.

How came, now, the writing between the pair of slates, and in the closed double slate? About the former, it is certain that the slate on which the writing came was one of the three I had purchased that evening at Cambridge; as was attested by its size corresponding with the two others marked, and also by the shape of the frames, and the cracks in them noticed by Hodgson. I confess I do not remember even after such a brief lapse of time, whether I had examined the two slates *not* washed by me, and found them unwritten. I imagine I must have, for otherwise it would be very stupid; and, besides, if there had been any writing it would not have escaped the notice of Mr. Russell, who seemed to be particularly careful. Besides, we constantly looked to see if there was any writing there. Of course, a conjurer of ordinary pretensions could deceive on the last point. There might be writing on the bottom surface of the lower slate, while we could observe only the three upper surfaces, if so many. Before we saw the writing there, Mr. C. gave a push, and though I am almost sure that it was I who removed the upper slate, and found the writing there, I am afraid I cannot be certain. Indeed, I doubt if I can with any confidence assert whether the writing was on the lower surface of the upper slate, or the upper surface of the lower slate, even if I was certain that it was not on the lowest face. When I re-

member that Mr. C. is deliberately anxious to be tried by no other than a conjurer's standard, and also that I have omitted to notice things so elementary, and yet so essential, even some of them actually suggested for my observation by Mr. C., I regret I did not ask some one else of the party to observe and act. For it is evident that if I did not see the slates clean on *all* the surfaces before commencement, my testimony becomes absolutely valueless. But now suppose that we have satisfaction on these heads, still it may be considered possible that the writing may be precipitated by chemical means. Whether, if the writing disappears under the influence of water, the chemical theory may still hold, of course I cannot say. But if so, it is curious that Mr. C. could *push* the slates at a particular moment; and before that none of us could notice, in that full light, any formation of letters, or gradual precipitation, that I can see. Besides, Mr. C. could barely have had time enough to tamper with the slates. He told me himself that he had observed them lying. He had almost 40 minutes to himself, with little intervals, when Hodgson would come in. He might during that interval have written out all the first message, without using a chemical; in that case we are all guilty of gross negligence which it is ridiculous to credit my colleagues with. But he might have also used a chemical; only he could not have foreseen the opportunity of my going out; and as everyone is supposed to bring his own slates, why he should carry about chemicals with him it is difficult to see. In this connection I may also observe that Mr. C. remarked to me during our conversation after tea, how great the temptation is for the occultist to be fraudulent; when pecuniary remuneration is not the object, "the good of the cause" is supposed to justify them, and it may not be unjust to add,—the desire to make people talk about them is not altogether a factor without influence. Just imagine the temptation in Vanity Fair of an \* \* \*, the guest of princes and emperors, and having the great honour of a recommendation from the first of living Englishmen—Mr. \* \* ! But it is only fair to Mr. C. to say that he holds this justification, he says, in great abomination. As for the selection of colours being blue and red, and turning out so, it seems to me quite natural, and it may not be without significance that the white writing with chalk we asked for never came. Besides, there is nothing in the matter itself which may not have been written beforehand, indeed it was not what we had wanted. Now, though I point out my own defects of observation, it is only to show how little really my testimony is worth except for points of confirmation; and I hope I shall be able to remedy them next time.

Somewhat different is the case of the double closed slate. I do not remember it to have been washed; but there never was any writing on it except a scratch occasionally, whenever I opened it, with the exception of the last time. As I opened it myself I think I could easily have observed any *gradual* precipitations. The reference to "Brain as an organ of Mind" is not altogether without significance. It is also evident that Mr. C. must have minutely studied the time it takes for complete precipitation; or that the whole precipitation takes place simultaneously; or that the phenomenon is undoubtedly genuine. The theory of mere writing without a chemical and then bamboozling me would be really contemptible.

The reading of numbers was not a failure ; but it was not convincing. "Boorzu," however, was remarkable.

On the whole, I myself strongly incline more towards the genuineness of the phenomena than the reverse ; but I cannot disguise it from myself that that is largely due to a previous impression gathered from Mr. C.'s results with others which were read out to me. If I get the same things next time with *my own* double-slate, and a pair of slates that have never left my sight, I think I should be justified in being convinced of something abnormal.

#### *Report of Mr. RUSSELL.*

On Wednesday evening, September 15, I was present with my wife at a slate-writing séance given by Mr. Clifford. We sat in the private sitting-room of my friend Mr. R. Hodgson, at No. 1, Furnival's Inn. Besides Mr. Clifford, Mr. Hodgson, my wife and self, there were present Mr. Hughes (another great friend of mine) and . . . Mr. Padshah. I had never seen either Mr. C. or Mr. P. before. We sat round an ordinary deal table. Mr. P. was on Mr. C.'s right hand, I on his left. On the table were 3 or 4 single slates which Mr. P. had brought with him, and a double slate fitted with lock and key belonging to Mr. Clifford.

As soon as we were seated at the table Mr. C. washed the double slate with sponge and water, and then handed it round for inspection. As we expressed ourselves satisfied that it was perfectly clean, he placed a small piece of ordinary crayon inside, locked it and gave it to Mr. Padshah to keep. Mr. P. having put it on his own chair behind his back, Mr. C. took one of the single slates, washed it clean, put a small piece of crayon on it and placed it under one corner of the table, holding it there with his right hand (thumb in sight on the table, four fingers out of sight below), Mr. P. holding it in the same manner with his left hand. We then joined hands and talked, waiting for the sound of writing. After some minutes Mr. C. brought up the slate, but there was nothing on it. He then put some small pieces of chalk on one of the other slates lying on the table, covered it with another slate, and said he would try to get some writing there if we would choose the colours we would like it in. Mr. P. chose blue and my wife (at my suggestion) red. Mr. C. then replaced the single slate under the corner of the table, holding it as before, but again several minutes passed without any result. He then asked my wife to change places with Mr. P., which she did, holding the slate with her left hand as he had done. But again, after several minutes, there was no writing. Then my wife and Mr. P. took their old places, Mr. C. once more put the slate under the corner as before, and asked Mr. P. to think of some number under 10, saying that he would try to get it written for him. He then said aloud : "Please say whether we shall get anything to-night," soon after which Mr. P. declared he heard the sound of writing ; whereupon the slate was brought up, and the word "yes" and the number "6" were found upon it. Mr. P. said he had thought of 5, but explained that he made his fives in such a curious way that they might easily be mistaken for sixes. Mr. C. now said that a start having been made, more success might be looked for, so the experiment was repeated, the slate being brought up at intervals of from 5 to 10 minutes. The first time it had the letters BOORZ upon it,

which Mr. P. explained were the first five letters of his Christian name which was in Persian written BOORZU. Neither Mr. Hodgson, Mr. Hughes, my wife, nor myself had ever heard of this name before, but I did not quite understand whether Mr. C. had or had not heard it from Mr. P. before the sitting began.

Next time there was the single word "Wait," and a little later the words "Try Chalks." We accordingly concentrated our attention on the two slates with the chalks between them, which had been left lying on the table.

\* \* \* \* \*

J. RUSSELL.

#### *Report of MRS. RUSSELL.*

I was present with my husband at a séance given by Mr. Clifford to Mr. Padshah at Mr. Hodgson's rooms in Furnival's Inn, on Wednesday night, the 15th inst.

There were six of us present. We sat round a small deal table, which had a drawer at each end. The one my end was empty. I did not examine the other. Two lamps were in the room, and four candles, one of which was on the table. Mr. Padshah sat next to Mr. Clifford and I next to Mr. Padshah. He began by cleaning the inside of a locked slate given him by Mr. Clifford, who having chosen and put inside a small piece of chalk, desired Mr. Padshah to lock the slate and keep it in his possession. Mr. Padshah locked it and put it behind him in the chair he was sitting in, and the key in his pocket. Mr. Clifford then took a small ordinary slate, and a small piece of slate pencil with no points, asking Mr. Padshah to first clean the slate himself on both sides. This being done they both held the slate under the edge of the table with the fingers on the slate and the thumbs on the edge of the table. We then all joined hands, and sat talking for some time. Once or twice Mr. Clifford took out the slate to examine, but found no writing. He then asked me to change places with Mr. Padshah, and hold the slate, which I did. Once or twice he took out the slate whilst I was holding it, and once there was a zigzag pencil mark on it which was not there before, but no writing. Mr. Padshah then took the slate again. We still went on waiting, and taking out the slate to look at. Twice, some white chalk that Mr. Padshah had chosen was crushed when we looked at it. Mr. Clifford then bent his head close to the table and asked in a loud voice, "Tell us if we shall have any manifestations to-night or no; only one word Yes or No." After waiting again Mr. Padshah said he heard the sound of writing. On looking, "Yes" was found written on the slate. The letters were very uneven and scrawling. Mr. Clifford then asked Mr. Padshah to think of a number, and a figure 6 was given instead of a 5 which he had thought of. But Mr. Padshah explained it by saying that he usually made those figures very much alike, and it would be easy to confuse them. After waiting again the single word "Wait" was found, and a little time afterwards "Try chalks" in the same bad writing (so bad that we turned it first one way and then another to make it out) with a very imperfect figure 8 that Mr. Padshah had been thinking of. Mr. Padshah himself discovered this last just as Mr. Clifford was putting back the slate under the table. Nothing was yet found in the locked slate. Mr. Clifford then put in several pieces of



colored chalks between two slates which had been lying on the table all the time, with one piece of pencil inside, and he and my husband placed their hands on it. On again taking up the slate under the table, a curious word appeared written on it which we could not read, written in much better characters, but which appeared to me to be a foreign word.

On Mr. Padshah's looking at it, he exclaimed "Why it is my own name Boorzu, which I am hardly ever called by!" No one at the table knew it was Mr. Padshah's name, Mr. Clifford being positive that he had never heard it before, and indeed neither of us had. Mr. Padshah then reminded Mr. Clifford that he had asked him to ask his name before tea, which Mr. Clifford said he had forgotten.

\* \* \* \* \*

BESSIE RUSSELL.

I shall here give only two more reports.

*Report of MR. A. S. BLOCK.*

October 30, 1886.

DEAR MR. DAVEY,

Few of the persons who have witnessed your extraordinary performances can have done so with more impartial minds than I and my young son, Alfred, did. He, a youth of 16, perfectly ignorant of the whole subject of Spiritualism, mediums, or psychical science, with eyes quick to discern every movement of hand or body; I, calmly observing what I saw without desiring to theorise or account for the same, or the way in which it was accomplished.

Having heard of what you were doing I was curious to witness myself your performances, and you kindly gratified me by giving me what I suppose you would call a *séance*. To my own disappointment, and I fear to your own inconvenience and perhaps greater strain of mind in consequence, I had but half-an-hour with you, having to catch my last train home.

You, my son, and I having adjourned to the library, sat down at a small ordinary table with folding flaps, when you produced several slates and a small folding slate with hinges and patent lock. Giving me the latter you asked me to thoroughly sponge and wipe it, and placing a very small piece of pencil between the two slates, I locked them and gave the key to my son, and placed the slate in my right hand pocket, being the side away from you. You then handed me an ordinary slate which you requested me also to well sponge and wipe and put a mark in the corner of each side, which I did. Then, putting a small piece of pencil in the middle of the slate you placed it—or slid it—*under* the corner of the extended flap of the table, placing the fingers of your right hand under it, and your thumb on the upper side of the table, and your left hand on the table; I placing the fingers of my left hand next and touching yours under the slate, and thumb on the table, and with my right hand holding the left hand of my son. In a few seconds you said, "Will you ask a question?" when I asked, "What shall I be doing this time to-morrow night?" In about 3 or 4 minutes a slight scratching was to be heard, and you slid the slate from under the table, and only a mark of an illegible word was to be seen. The slate was again sponged and wiped by me, and again replaced by

you in the same position as before—when you, either as part of the performance or in fun, evinced some impatience and demanded an answer to my question, and in a few minutes scratching was again heard, and on withdrawing the slate from under the table, the word “Reading” very legibly written, was on the slate.

You then took two slates which you handed to me to sponge and wipe as before, which I did, and placing 3 or 4 small pieces of coloured chalk, which you placed between the 2 slates, which were placed on the top of the table, you asked my son to take a book from the bookcase, to think of a page without letting you know either the book or the page thought of, and keep the book in his possession. Then asking him in what coloured chalk the writing should appear—he desired it should be in red—you placed both your hands firmly on the upper slate; I placed both mine, and my son did the same, all of us pressing on the slates firmly.

Waiting a few minutes, you again manifested impatience and excitement at the little delay, when we soon after distinctly heard a scratching between the slates, which when looked at, the upper slate was found covered with writing, in red chalk as desired. The writing was apparently an extract of some kind, but unfortunately the opportunity of testing its accuracy was lost as my son omitted to think of a page.

Although the time at our disposal was but a few minutes—a quarter of an hour at most—you kindly performed another trick, which was writing between the locked slates. As I have said, these were handed to me by you at the commencement of our sitting, were sponged and wiped by me, a piece of pencil placed between the two slates—locked by me, and key handed by me to my son and the slates placed in my pocket, so that it was manifest you never had any touch or handling of these locked-up slates. Asking me to unlock them I did so and found them in the same condition as when I placed them in my pocket. I, however, again wiped them with the sponge—you replaced the small piece of pencil, I locked them together again, handing the key to my son, and handing you the slates thus locked. These you placed on the top corner of the table, placing both your hands upon them—I and my son doing the same. In about 3 minutes, at most, you began to press energetically upon the slates, when we heard very distinctly a slight scratching between them. You called my attention to the sound, lifting your hands, called my observation to the fact that when you did so the sound stopped,—being again audible when you replaced your hands. In a few seconds taking away your hands, you asked me to unlock the slates, which I did and there saw writing in a good flowing hand—not in your style I observed, on the whole of the upper, and on part of the lower slate. I read the first few lines, which were that it was hoped I had enjoyed the entertainment.

I much regret my hurried departure.

In the above memorandum, I have repeated I believe faithfully what I saw.

Yours faithfully,

ALFRED S. BLOCK.

After receiving Mr. Block's report I asked him the following questions :—

1. Kindly say on which side the writing appeared when the slate was held against the table, viz., was it on the lower side where my fingers were or upon the upper side nearest the table ; also when you grasped the slate with me against the table do you remember if you held it firmly or not ?
2. Did I endeavour to distract your attention from the slates ?
3. To the best of your belief were the slates devoid of writing when you examined and marked them, and did either Alfred or yourself observe the slightest opportunity for my writing on them by ordinary natural means ?

Mr. Block replied on November 6th, 1886, as follows :—

1. The writing was on the side of the slate nearest the table, and as you held the slate and I also held it very tightly against the under side of the table flap, it appeared to me to be impossible for you to have touched the pencil or *that* side of the slate on which the writing appeared.

2. You certainly did not appear to endeavour to distract my attention from the slate—quite the contrary.

3. To the best of my belief and as far as the evidence of my own and Alfred's eyes could be relied upon the slates were all perfectly devoid of writing or marking before the performance, in addition to which as I have said I well sponged and wiped the slates myself and marked them before you received them from me.

I may also state that neither Alfred or I observed the slightest opportunity for your writing on them by ordinary natural means.

A. S. BLOCK.

*Report of MR. B. J. TEN BRÜGGENKATE.*

*November 30th, 1886.*

It was my good fortune to witness last night some of the most interesting feats of what appeared to be conjuring that I have ever seen. I had previously had several conversations with Mr. Davey upon the subject of Spiritualism and slate-writing, and last evening when alone with him at his house he volunteered to give me a séance.

The room was a well lighted library, the table at which we sat was an ordinary somewhat old-fashioned Pembroke table, and the slates used were of the common school type, as well as one small folding slate fitted with hinges and a Chatwood lock and key.

Mr. Davey gave me the locked slate and asked me to examine it carefully, which I did and failed to find any trick or anything of the kind about it. The "medium" then asked me to write a question upon the slate, to place a small piece of pencil between the two, to lock it up and put both slate and key in my pocket. I did this in Mr. Davey's absence, he having been called away for a moment. Mr. Davey then took one of the ordinary slates, and placing a splinter of pencil upon it we both held it close under the table, and after a lapse of a few minutes got some writing upon it, the writing I remarked at the time being in an opposite direction to Mr. Davey. Mr. Davey then returned to the locked slate, *which had been in my pocket all the time*, and upon placing

this slate upon the table, very faint scratching was heard, and a complete and full answer to my question was returned. What was to me most extraordinary was, that Mr. Davey did not know what question I had asked, and yet the answer was definite and complete.

The next performance was even more wonderful. I took two common slates, thoroughly cleaned them, and placed some pieces of red chalk between them, and we kept our hands firmly upon them; in a short time faint scratching was heard and upon lifting the top slate I found it to be covered with writing written in a diagonal direction across the slate, the writing again appearing in an opposite direction to Mr. Davey, *i. e.*, as we sat opposite one another it appeared as if I had written it.

The last experiment was only partially successful. Mr. Davey asked me to choose a book from the shelves, unknown to him, and to sit upon it in order that it should be invisible to him—then to write a number upon a slate; I wrote “*five*”—then to think of a number; I thought of “*seven*.” The locked slate was again put upon the table, scratching was heard, and upon opening it I found a verse from page 8 line 4 of the book I had chosen, written distinctly upon the slate. I wish it to be observed that I did not fix my mind attentively upon the number “*seven*” I had thought of—my attention being called off by some remarks of Mr. Davey; also that Mr. Davey did not know the book I had chosen, so that I quite fail to see how he could produce any writing from the book. This ended the séance, and I am at a loss to conceive how the writing can possibly come upon the slate. There was not a chance of Mr. Davey being able to get at the slates during the performance. When I placed the two open slates one upon another with the red chalk between them, I made the remark that if writing was produced upon either of them I should be ready to believe anything—for they were covered with my hand directly they were on the top of each other and were never moved until writing appeared.

B. J. TEN BRÜGGENKATE.

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#### AUTOMATIC WRITING.

In reply to inquiries, the following communications have been received from M. Aksakof, with respect to the account of “*Automatic Writing*,” printed in the *Journal* for September (p. 404). A few slight changes in expression have been made, in accordance with M. Aksakof’s request.

St. Petersburg, Nevsky Prospect, 6.  
October, 1886.

. . . I shall give you with pleasure all the information you may require concerning the case of automatic writing published in the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research, September, 1886, because I consider this case as one of the best, and as positively proving the possibility of receiving through automatic writing information unknown to the sitters.

1. In the first place, I must remark that the reference to the *Psychische Studien*, as given in the *Journal*, is not correct; the case was published in *Psychische Studien* in 1885, p. 49 (and not in 1884, p. 149).\*

2. The séance was held the 10-22 February, 1882, in my own apartment. The dates given in my journal—1860-1861—were, for certain reasons, fictitious.

3. You ask, "Can we be sure that the mediums, requested to repeat the sentence, did not remember the letters?" I think they could not, because the letters were dictated to me with the usual indifference, quite automatically. Generally, when there is a meaning in the first letters, the spelled words can be easily remembered; if not, you immediately lose the connection. Try yourself, after dictating 12 letters at random, to repeat them, and you will see the difficulty. But you will have the advantage of being able to direct special attention to the letters, *knowing that you are about to repeat them*; in the case in question, the mediums did not know that they would have to repeat the letters, and had no reason therefore to give any particular attention to them; this is an important point. Take also into consideration the fact that I did not request the sentence to be repeated immediately after it was dictated to me, but after an exchange of questions and answers with the invisible or supposed interlocutor; these answers, as I see in my notes, consist of 172 letters; this was quite enough to obliterate the impression of the 12 nonsensical letters. Finally, when the words were said to be Hebrew, I asked that they should be repeated not with the French, but with the Russian alphabet, and to do this required a repetition not of the same letters, but of the same sounds.

4. You have omitted an important† particular: after this repetition I requested the first word (in the German translation erroneously rendered: "the last word") to be given, and it was immediately spelled: *emek*; this answer presupposes in my unconscious self a conscious knowledge of the meaning of the two words. Now, as the gist of the test resides in the justification of the supposition that these two words were unconsciously impressed in my brain, I beg to submit for consideration the following points:—

(a) My reading of the Hebrew was auto-didactic deciphering, not knowledge; the reading of the Hebrew is not easy, because the pronunciation of the words is indicated not by vowels, but by small points and signs put round the letters; hence, for this case, it would not have been enough to receive an impression of the letters; an *exact reading* of them—a careful deciphering—would also have been required; because, *the same letters remaining*, their pronunciation might easily have been erroneously impressed; for example, the first word, *emek*, consists, in Hebrew, only of three letters, which admit of various pronunciations: *amek*, *amok*, *amak*, *omek*—changing the signification of the three letters forming a root.

\* The date which I gave was that of the number of *Psychische Studien*, from which I took the first paragraph of my abstract. The account of the séance in which the Hebrew words were given, appeared, as M. Aksakof states, in February, 1885.

† It had not struck me that the repetition of the first word was important, and M. Aksakof did not mention it when he read my translation in MS.

(b) The reading in Latin letters (*emek habaccha*) is never given in the editions of the Hebrew Bible or in Hebrew dictionaries; at least, I have not seen such a reading; so that the more easily produced impression of these two words in Latin letters could not have taken place.

(c) Nevertheless, let us suppose that by some chance the said letters and their reading had been unconsciously impressed on my brain; whence comes the knowledge of their meaning? This knowledge could have been gained only with the help of dictionaries or translations, *i.e.*, only by the study of the unique place in the Old Testament—the 84th Psalm—where the said expression is found. I positively deny having ever made this study or acquired this knowledge, because my deciphering of the Hebrew Bible 30 years ago was confined to the first chapter of Genesis and the first 10 Psalms—as I can prove by my notes at the time.

5. As to Cardoso's name, you ask: "What evidence is there that you or one of the mediums might not have seen it yourselves in Didot's *Biographie*, which you consulted at the conclusion of the séance? Was not the *Biographie* as accessible before as after the séance?" The *Biographie* of 46 volumes is placed in a cupboard, containing books only for exceptional reference, relegated to an antechamber (entry) and always locked. Till these séances I never consulted this biography, as my occupations do not require its special use, the more so that for ordinary information I have in my cabinet, on a shelf, the *Biography of the English Cyclopædia*, in 6 vols. 4to. Before the Cardoso case, I consulted the French *Biographie* only twice, also for communications that we received some time before, as reported in *Psychische Studien*, 1884, pp. 158 and 566. The names searched for were: *Aper, Porcius Cato, Gallus, Diocletianus*. On the back of each volume is printed the first and the last name it contains; thus, on the volume where I found *Cardoso*, was printed: "*Cabacius—Caselles*," consequently it was not touched on the two first occasions, and it was myself who took the necessary volumes from the cupboard.—Nevertheless, let us suppose, that by some chance, when opening this particular volume, only for a moment, one of us received the impression of *Cardoso's* name; that will not cover the difficulty, because particulars are given: nationality, profession, celebrity, religion. In the communication he is called directly "a Jewish doctor"; not so in the *Biographie*, where we find in the middle of the article the following phrase: "Ce qu'il y eut de vraiment particulier dans la vie de ce savant, c'est qu'il abandonna la religion chrétienne, dans laquelle il avait été élevé, pour entrer dans le sein du judaïsme, dont il devint un fervent apôtre." For all these particulars a reading of the whole article, not a glance at it, was necessary, the more so that the text of the *Biographie* is printed with small type. But, as I said, the volume was not even touched.

6. There still remains for explanation what appears to me to be the greatest difficulty of all, namely, the correlation (a plausible one) between the Hebrew saying and Cardoso—between two supposed unconscious impressions, one originating from my brain, the other from the medium's. For my unconscious self the reference of the Hebrew saying to Cardoso was a logical impossibility, because if I had already received and retained the impression of the Hebrew sentence, of its reading and meaning, I would have also, unavoidably, received and retained the impression of its being referred to its veritable source, which was in my hands, and not to a certain Portuguese physician, whose name I had never heard. Hence, if one of us must be regarded as the originator of the name, it must be one of the mediums, for whom, *vice versa*, the Hebrew saying was a positive impossibility. And here comes the remarkable thing that, although the "motto" has not yet been found (and perhaps never may be found) in the works of Cardoso, the reasonableness of attributing it to Cardoso is proven, because he turned out

to be a man profoundly versed in Hebrew, so fond of it that he finally embraced the Hebrew religion, and his philosophical works—as I have seen—are full of *Hebrew citations*. And so, if we do not admit an extraneous source of knowledge, we must say that a supposed latent unconscious impression of a consciously unknown *Hebrew* saying, was suddenly evoked in my brain by a medium, sitting apart, when I was busy in writing down his automatic dictations in the *Russian* language; and the evoking of this impression in me, reacting mentally on the medium for explanation, evoked in him, suddenly, also a latent unconscious impression of a consciously unknown name, fitting with the unknown saying. Is that not too much?

7. The account published in *Psychische Studien* was written from full notes made by me at the time and which I have now in my hands.

8. We could arrive at no conclusion as to the identity of the communicating intelligence; he would never give his name, and there was no reason to attribute the communication to Cardoso himself. The intelligence, when evoked by me afterwards, deprecated having any knowledge of Hebrew, saying it was only a reminiscence.

The testimony of my sister-in-law—Mrs. Wiesler, and my step-son—Sergius Manouhinn, is appended to this letter. I can vouch that Professor Boutlerof, who was present, would have signed it also;—unfortunately, it is now beyond his power to do so.\* I know that he considered this case as one absolutely proving an extraneous source of knowledge. He took no part in the séance, but sat at a distance, listening to the philosophic controversy with our strange interlocutor, whose replies were always full of wit and sarcasm. Once he dictated through the same mediums a whole phrase in Italian, which was found to be perfectly correct. . . .

A. AKSAKOF.

We the undersigned herewith testify that the record of the séance of the 10-22 February, 1882, as given by M. Aksakof in the *Psychische Studien*, 1885, pp. 49-54, is perfectly correct. We were alone at the table, holding our right hands on the planchette. We are both completely ignorant of the Hebrew, never heard of Cardoso, never had any access to the biographic dictionary in question, and never perused any of its volumes; on some occasions the necessary volumes were consulted by M. Aksakof himself.

ANASTASIE WIESLER.  
SERGIUS MANOUHINN.

1st October, 1886.  
St. Petersburg.

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### CORRESPONDENCE.

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To the Editor of the JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

SIR,—The letter of “M. B.” in the *Journal* for November opens up a question which I venture to think is of the utmost importance in relation to the investigation in which our Society is engaged. There can be no doubt that our inquiry is beset with many difficulties, and possibly dangers, in consequence of our ignorance of the comparatively unknown land upon which we are seeking to gain a foothold. And so far as any experiments in the different branches of our work might be reasonably supposed to subject the

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\* The death of Professor Boutlerof, one of the Corresponding Members of our Society, was recorded in the *Journal* for November, p. 442.

agent or percipient to the invasion of deteriorating influences, without any corresponding moral advantage such as the pervasion of improving influences, I for one should urge that experiments involving this danger ought to be avoided. But I do not think that we should be justified in making the suppositions which "M. B." appears to favour.

In the first place, I cannot find that the experiments in "te'opathy, automatic writing, &c.," to which "M. B." refers, "require the will of the percipient to be, so to speak, annulled for the time, and the mind left blank," so that it may be invaded by *any influence whatever*. So far is the will from being annulled that it has probably been concentrated either upon perceiving, in activity,—or receiving, in passivity, the impressions of—perceptions or feelings experienced by some specific personality. This process, I take it, is a very different one from opening the mind to any influence whatever, as indeed we might infer from the counterparts of such processes in ordinary human experience. That it is so is suggested, moreover, even by "M. B.," who says that recent experiments in hypnotic suggestion "seem to show that . . . a sub-conscious resistance is almost invariably found to any practically undesirable suggestion made by the experiments, when the subject is a rational and self-controlled person." A strenuous activity against debasing influences may well consist with a strenuous passivity, if I may so speak, to exalting influences. Certainly, as "M. B." says, "we should not think it wise to allow ourselves to be mesmerised by persons of known bad character"; and no doubt the acquirement of a greater sensitiveness to what I may vaguely term supernormal influences of a purifying nature, may carry with it the possibilities of a deeper degradation. The counterpart of this again we also find in ordinary human experience; and in reply to any objection on this ground I should think it sufficient to profess my faith:

"Certain, if knowledge bring the sword,  
That knowledge takes the sword away."

But, in the second place, possibly the special hypothesis to which "M. B." draws attention may be that in the class of experiments referred to, we lay ourselves open very little, if at all, to "higher" spirits, but only or chiefly to those of a "lower" order. If so, I should say that the only evidence I have myself seen for such a theory is not worth consideration; it depends upon the supposed deterioration of alleged "Spiritualistic mediums," in consequence of the "spirit-influences" to which they have been subjected. They have, it is asserted, *become* fraudulent and vicious, after a career, as mediums, of honesty and purity; but I think it probable, that in the majority at least of these cases, the supposed "mediums" have been fraudulent from the beginning.

I agree, then, with "M. B." in thinking that "we should be wise to put ourselves on the defensive," in the sense that we should not adopt the mental attitude of being willing to surrender ourselves to any impulse that may "hap" to come. And this may be all the caution that "M. B." means to emphasise; though in truth we are far as yet, in my opinion, from being "shipwrecked in the dark upon an unknown island, of which we are ignorant whether it is desert or inhabited by friendly or hostile tribes"; rather do we

"float about a glimmering night, and watch  
A full sea glazed with muffled moonlight swell  
On some dark shore just seen that it is rich."

I am, &c.,  
RICHARD HODGSON.